

'Would-be Bush assassin' held in Kuwait

KUWAIT (AP) — Authorities have arrested a man who confessed he planned a suicide bomb attack against visiting former U.S. President George Bush, the defence minister said Tuesday. Sheikh Ali Sabah Al Salem, who is also a member of the ruling family, said the would-be attacker was one of 14 people detained in connection with an Iraqi plot against the emirate. They drove from Iraq into Kuwait with carloads of explosives, Sheikh Ali said. After they were arrested, one of them confessed he planned to strap explosives around his waist and blow himself up, along with Mr. Bush, the defence minister said. Sheikh Ali said 17 people were implicated in the plot but three were still at large. The names have not been announced. Of the 17, five are Kuwaitis while the others are either Iraqis or "bidoons," the Kuwaiti term for long-term, stateless residents of the emirate who do not qualify for citizenship. The group crossed the border in a number of vehicles loaded with 100 kilograms of explosives, Sheikh Ali said. He said the man who planned the attack against Mr. Bush formulated the idea on his own and planned to act alone against the former president. Sheikh Ali did not say if the would-be assassin ever tried to carry out his plot or whether there was any evidence against him apart from the alleged confession.

Jordan Times

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جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الرابطة

Islamic network smashed, Cairo says

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian security forces have smashed a network of Islamic militants responsible for a series of attacks in Cairo, including last week's attempted assassination of Information Minister Sawlat Al Sherif, the Interior Ministry said Tuesday. It identified four of the eight suspects arrested as "leaders" of the network and said they had been trained in Afghanistan. They were arrested in the northern town of Mansara following the April 20 attack on Mr. Sherif. One of the gang's chiefs has been identified as 29-year-old Asraf Al Sayed Ibrahim, a suspect in the murder last June of author Farag Foda. The other men were captured in search operations in Cairo and northern Egypt. The network is linked to the underground Al Jihad group responsible for the assassination of former President Anwar Sadat. All the suspects, the ministry said, admitted responsibility for the bombing of a tour bus outside Cairo's main archaeological museum in March, during which there were no casualties. They also claimed responsibility for another bus attack last month in a central Cairo square, which killed a police officer, it added. The suspects said they had planned to murder public figures and police officers as well as bomb areas frequented by foreign tourists.

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U.S. denies working with Egyptian cleric

CAIRO (R) — The United States has denied its intelligence agents worked with a radical Muslim preacher living in New Jersey whose alleged followers have been charged with the World Trade Centre bombing. U.S. Ambassador to Egypt Robert Pelletreau was responding to reports which suggested Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman was allowed into the United States in 1990 because he helped the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) channel funds to guerrillas fighting the then-communist government in Afghanistan. U.S. and state-controlled Egyptian newspapers have both questioned the State Department's version that it made a mistake when it granted a visa to Sheikh Abdul Rahman, who had been tried three times in Egypt for inciting violence. "Our officials do not have operational contacts with Omar Abdul Rahman nor did they have such contacts with him in the past, as has been alleged, during the time of our support for the Mujahideen in Afghanistan," Mr. Pelletreau told a group of local businessmen. "That is a false accusation" he added in a text of the speech made available Tuesday.

UAE offers to resume talks with Iran

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has offered to resume negotiations with Iran to settle an island dispute that reversed an improvement in Tehran's relations with its Gulf Arab neighbours. UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sheikh Hamdan Ben Zayed Al Nahayan made the offer in an address at a meeting of Islamic foreign ministers in Karachi Monday. "At a time when we have made great headway in restoring peace and security in our region, we reaffirm our readiness to continue a direct peaceful dialogue with the Islamic Republic of Iran to resolve the problem of the three islands, which belong to the UAE," he said. Official sources said Sheikh Hamdan discussed the dispute with Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati when they met in Karachi Sunday. But they had no information if they agreed on the resumption of the negotiations.

UNITA says it downed U.N. plane

SAO TOME (R) — The Angolan rebel movement UNITA said Tuesday that it shot down a United Nations relief plane near the eastern city of Luena. One of the two Russian crewmen injured after the plane was forced down into a minefield died of his wounds, said the U.N.'s World Food Programme (WFP), which chartered the plane. UNITA radio, monitored in the island state of Sao Tome and Principe, said its forces besieging Luena hit the Antonov An-12 transport with a missile on Monday and it crashed in flames.

Judges held hostage in Costa Rica

SAN JOSE (AP) — Gunmen holding 19 supreme court justices freed one magistrate Tuesday but pressed for a swift response to their demands for \$20 million and the release of an unspecified number of prisoners. Officials in Costa Rica and Colombia speculated that the kidnappers who stormed the court building Monday belong to Colombia's Medellin cocaine cartel and are seeking the release of four cartel members arrested in September who are now awaiting trial.

Pilots face charges in Indian air crash

AURANGABAD (AP) — Police accused two pilots of negligence Tuesday after an Indian Airlines jet hit a truck on takeoff and crashed, killing 36 passengers. The deaths were caused by rash and negligent behaviour of the pilots of the Boeing 737-200 whose wheels hit a truck laden with cotton bales Monday, city police chief Charan Singh Azad charged. Under Indian law, police can register a case on grounds of suspected negligence and start the investigation, Captain S.N. Singh, the pilot, and Captain Monisha Mohan the co-pilot, have not been arrested.

Bilaterals resume; U.S. promises active role

Israel's 'goodwill' measures awaited

Combined agency dispatches

WASHINGTON — Arabs and Israelis began a critical round of peace talks Tuesday after a four-month suspension and the United States served notice it would intervene to push the negotiations forward.

Israel held separate talks with Jordan, Lebanon and Syria Tuesday morning and was due to meet the Palestinian delegation in the afternoon.

As the talks got under way, the State Department announced that Secretary of State Warren Christopher would hold an unusual meeting with all the delegation heads of later Tuesday (see separate story).

Testifying before a Senate Appropriations subcommittee, Mr. Christopher said Tuesday the parties had to make a real effort to solve problems — not just identify and talk about them.

"Negotiations must be seen to work. A new sense of urgency and intensity in the talks must be evident," he said.

Syria's chief negotiator, Mouwafak Al Arafat, welcomed the meeting with Mr. Christopher as a sign of a more active U.S. role. The previous administration of President George Bush had taken a largely hands-off approach to the peace talks, urging the parties to solve their own problems.

"It seems there is a big impetus of the role of the two sponsors, especially the American sponsor," Mr. Arafat said. "The proof of that is the meeting which will be held today with the secretary of state."

Russia and the United States are co-sponsors of the talks but Washington is far the senior partner.

"We hope this is the beginning of a nice, good, constructive round," said Abdul Salam Al Majali, the chief Jordanian negotiator.

Israel's chief negotiator, Elyakim Rubinstein, said he hoped the Arabs were coming back to the table with a "spirit of goodwill." He said they would find the Israeli delegations "attentive and listening."

The Israelis were reportedly carrying a message listing a series of "goodwill gestures," but a member of the delegation would not confirm when those might be presented.

Israeli officials said concessions would include the return of the first 35 Palestinians from among more than 1,200 expelled before the uprising broke out in 1967.

Israel was also expected to offer other measures to improve conditions in the occupied territories and will establish a human rights subcommittee.

(Continued on page 6)

Syria warns of war if talks fail, page 2

Expellees since 1967 prepare to return home

By Mariam M. Shahin
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Palestinian expellees who are expected to be among the first batch of Palestinians to be allowed to return home waited in Amman Tuesday for a formal Israeli announcement of an American-sponsored plan to allow for the return of more than 2,000 Palestinians expelled by the Israeli occupation authorities since 1967.

Tears of joy and getting last-minute things done dominated Tuesday for the expellees, almost all of whom have made Jordan their home since their expulsion in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) officials confirmed Tuesday that an announcement of some 35 to 37 names was expected by Wednesday morning "at the latest."

"We expect that the return will take place either Thursday or Sunday — most probably Sunday," said Palestine Central Council (PCC) member and PLO official Saleh Raafat.

The repatriation of the exiles will be the first concrete step taken by Israel towards its Arab neighbours since the peace process began almost two years ago.

The Israeli announcement is expected to include some 151 Palestinians expelled to Marj Al Zuhour in South Lebanon last December.

The expellees in South Lebanon have said they will not accept a phased return and will only return as a group (see story below).

Palestinian officials are confident that the gradual repatriation of some 2,000 expellees will take place in the next 12 months.

"We have been given to understand that people will be allowed back in groups of 30 to 50 people," said 1980 expellee Aishe Odeh.

Although Ms. Odeh will not be among the first batch of returnees she hopes to be allowed back home in the next 12 months.

"I hope that next year at this time I will be back home," said the political activist, who spent ten years in Israeli prisons.

Israel has said that it would defer the return of Palestinian expellees involved in military operations against the Jewish state as well as those holding high posts in the PLO and the Palestine National Council (PNC).

About half of those expected to be allowed to return belong to the PCC or PNC.

Heading the list of returnees is the chief of the Federation of Palestinian Women, Isam Abdul (Continued on page 6)

PLO gamble, page 7

Palestinians seeks neutral mission on water rights

GENEVA (Agencies) — A senior Palestinian official on Tuesday called for a neutral international mission to determine his people's rights to water on territories occupied by Israel.

Riyad Al Khoudary, a hydrology professor from Gaza, told a news conference he had issued the call at the opening of a multilateral working group on water resources which is part of the overall Middle East peace process.

"We cannot proceed in the working group without assessing our water rights," he said. "A fact-finding mission is not a precondition but a demand of the Palestinian people."

Israel draws more than half its water from the springs and rivers of the occupied territories, and Palestinians say while they recognise Israeli needs they seek a more equitable share and an end to restrictions on their rights to dig wells.

"The starting point is our rights," said Mr. Khoudary. "You can talk hundreds of hours about academic studies, but this being the first round to be held after the Clinton administration came into office in January, the meeting called for by Mr. Christopher was seen by analysts here as first tangible indication of a more active role by the Americans."

"We understand the role of full partner as one that would bridge proposals, find common ground and one that would create conditions (for the U.S. to assume a) role in which it can act as guarantor of a settlement," Dr. Marwan Muasher, spokesman for the Jordanian delegation, said in an interview.

"We are encouraged by the fact that the meeting was called at such an early time in the round and indicates a heightened representation and a higher level involvement," Dr. Muasher said.

Added to these elements is a new U.S. initiative to assign liaison officers to each track of negotiations, "which indicates a day to day involvement and understanding of the position of the different parties."

The new liaison officers are a welcome development not only because of the increased U.S. involvement in each track but also because they are more senior than the ones who periodically handled such a U.S. daily involvement with the earlier administration, Dr. Muasher said.

While the "full partner" role is viewed as a positive development by

Christopher seen moving towards 'full partner role'

From Nermeen Murad in Washington

THE CLINTON administration may be taking its first step towards implementing its pledge to be "full partner" in the Arab-Israeli peace process by calling a first-time closed meeting of all five parties to the negotiations. Washington may be also taking the first concrete step towards affirming the comprehensiveness of a settlement of the conflict.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher was to hold a closed meeting with representatives of all five parties to the talks Tuesday afternoon (Washington time) — a step which has been interpreted positively by the Arab side especially in light of his pledge last week to "actually be evenhanded" between Arabs and Israelis.

Since January the newly-elected administration has been repeatedly saying that it wanted to elevate its role to that of a "full partner" — a concept that was widely speculated on but never concretely defined or tested on the ground because of the four-month delay in reopening talks here.

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King opens JTV satellite channel, urges media to live up to challenges

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein Tuesday called on the Jordanian media to build a new Arab man, drawing from history and the heritage of the Arab Nation and capable of absorbing the demands of the modern age and culture.

In an address marking the launching of a satellite channel for Jordan Television, King Hussein said that the new Arab person should be helped to contribute to the "general Arab renaissance and the united Arab state and Arab unity which Great Arab Revolt had sought to achieve and for which our forefathers have offered sacrifices."

"By inaugurating Jordan's television satellite channel, I hope that the new medium will serve as a pan-Arab voice committed to and working towards enhancing freedom and achieving Arab unity," he said.

"Let the vision be clear and let the voice be free, and pan-Arab oriented, but with a Jordanian character, totally committed to freedom and to confronting tyranny and committed to serving the cause of justice and noted with the feelings of brotherhood in the confrontation of hatred and malice," King Hussein said.

"Let Jordan's democratic rostrums be open and accessible to all Arab — as long as these voices have a genuine faith in this nation and its rights to freedom and justice," King Hussein said.

The King recalled that the Gulf crisis had destroyed many Arab efforts and left behind destruction and division among the Arabs.

"As a result of the crisis, we found ourselves facing numerous problems created by the retreat from pan-Arab culture and the principles of Arab thinking," King Hussein said.

He said the crisis brought about a "retreat from the dream of unity and an Arab tendency towards retrogression, towards accepting subjugation and hegemony with a loss of free will."

But the most sinister thing, he added, "is the retreat among Arabs from everything that is related to Arabism or Islam towards replacing these concepts with what is called 'consumption-oriented culture and the crumbs of the culture of other nations.'"

Congratulating Jordan Television, the King said its success was directly linked to the "free Jordanian person, reflecting his continued drive to achieve the noble human ambitions."

"It is true that the past 25 years were full of challenges at the social, political and natural levels, but the new era abounds with immense challenges which the new generation should rise to meet with reason, science and action," King Hussein stressed.

The young generation, he added, "should be helped to carry the standards in the new stage and remain characterised with the spirit of enthusiasm and creativity so that we can relay a true image of the new Jordan to the outside world."

King Hussein emphasised the need for the media to remain open and ready to adapt to the new facts in society, "the society of freedom, democracy and human rights, and to be able to have a clear vision, avoiding immediate reaction to events."

He expressed hope that the Jordanian media in general and Jordan Television in particular would "continue to represent the country's democratic face and open channels of genuine communication."

(Continued on page 6)

No response to aid call, page 6

Confident Yeltsin challenges rivals

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin drew strength from his weekend referendum win Tuesday, giving the rival parliament a last chance to cooperate or be bypassed and warning the Bosnian Serbs they were on their own.

With virtually all the votes counted, the electoral commission said Mr. Yeltsin had won 58 per cent in a vote of confidence and 53 per cent in a vote of his economic reforms.

As referendum tributes poured in from relieved Western leaders, Mr. Yeltsin warned Bosnian Serbs they would have to face the consequences alone if they continued to defy an international peace plan.

"The Russian Federation will not protect those who resist the will of the world community," he said in a statement distributed by his press office.

The statement apparently signalled an end to attempts to appease nationalists in parliament, who see Serbs as Russia's natural allies, on the Yugoslav question.

Mr. Yeltsin's opponents, led by parliament Chairman Russian Khasbulatov, have dismissed the results of the referendum as a draw with no impact on the debilitating power struggle.

But close presidential aide Mikhail Poltoranin told ITAR-TASS news agency Mr. Yeltsin had received enough votes to take tough action against parliament and its parent body, the Congress of People's Deputies.

"The president was given a free hand by the people to act decisively," he said.

Voters stopped short of deciding on early parliamentary elections as only 44 per cent of the overall electorate voted "yes" to that question while only 33 per cent of all eligible voters favoured an early presidential election.

Presidential aides were nonetheless unanimous in interpreting the results as a victory for Mr. Yeltsin, in particular on the second question on approval of reforms, which they viewed as a clear mandate for Mr. Yeltsin.

Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Shakhrai, Mr. Yeltsin's top legal adviser, warned that the parliament now had to freeze or reverse all resolutions that ran counter to the government's reform policies.

Mr. Shakhrai argued that the referendum results gave lawmakers a "moral and political obligation" to support reform and that the government would soon present a list of parliamentary decisions that should be revoked.



Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor are briefed Tuesday by JTV Director General Radi Alkhas on the new JTV satellite channel (photo by Youssef Al 'Allam)

55 injured in occupied lands

GAZA CITY, occupied Gaza Strip (Agencies) — Israeli troops wounded 55 Palestinians Tuesday in street battles on the Gaza Strip during a general strike against the resumption of Middle East talks, Palestinians said.

Soldiers fought stone-throwing demonstrators in Gaza City and four refugee camps. The strike was paralysed by the strike called by 10 Palestinian groups opposed to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) decision to attend a ninth round of negotiations which opened in Washington on Tuesday.

In the worst violence, troops shot 22 youths as they threw stones at two army rooftop look-out posts in Bureij camp. A wounded 12-year-old had a leg amputated, officials said at Shifa hospital in Khan Yunis.

In Rafah refugee camp, a soldier shot and seriously wounded a Palestinian who tried to hit him with an axe, military source said.

The strike was solid in Gaza, where Islamic fundamentalists towed the streets at dawn urging support through loudspeakers, and most of the West Bank.

Schools and shops were closed and buses off the roads although 12,500 Palestinians went to work in Israel, Israeli authorities said.

That was about half the number of Palestinians granted permits to work in Israel Tuesday despite the general ban on Arabs from the occupied territories entering the country.

The Israeli cabinet extended the ban, enforced since the end of March following the killing of 15 Israelis, at least until next weekend, officials said.

The strike came in direct defiance of the decision by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat that the Palestinian delegation should go back to the peace talks while 400 expellees remain stranded in South Lebanon.

The 10 groups, including the Popular and Democratic fronts which come under the PLO umbrella, claimed that the PLO leadership now represents only "a tiny minority" and any agreement reached with Israel would not be binding on the people.

There were some shouting matches Tuesday between opponents and backers of the peace talks, but no violence. Both sides appeared eager to avoid confrontation. In Gaza City, both Hamas and Fateh cancelled rallies at the last minute.

Derawsh calls for trace, page 2

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Yemenis vote in test for Arab democracy

SANAA (Agencies) — Voters flocked to polling stations Tuesday to elect a parliament, a rarity in the Arab Peninsula, where most countries are ruled by royal families.

It was the first election since North Yemen merged with South Yemen nearly three years ago.

The turnout was heavy in the morning when all but one of the 2,000 polling centres opened to voters, thousands of whom already were waiting in line.

It is expected to take three days to count the ballots and announce the results of the election that is a key test of Yemen's infant democracy.

Although the election was twice postponed over the past year because of political violence, Tuesday's voting was largely peaceful.

But polling station no. 90, in the Red Sea Hodeida province, was closed to voters because of a tribal shootout in which three people were killed last week.

That clash began when a candidate of the Muslim fundamentalist Al Islah candidate shot dead a rival candidate from the General People's Congress (GPC).

Steel-helmeted, rifle-wielding security forces guarded squares, intersections and polling stations beginning at midnight Monday.

Official sources said a total of 37,000 soldiers and security men have been deployed to ensure a peaceful turnout.

(Continued on page 6)

Experts see steady gain for democracy, page 2

Khartoum and rebels clear major snag in talks

ABUJA (AFP) — Sudan's military-led government and southern rebels agreed Tuesday to discuss confederation prospects for their war-torn country, ending a dispute which had held up the second day of crucial peace talks.

Conference participants said that both sides agreed in principle on a talks agenda submitted by host country Nigeria, containing a point on confederation, after "diplomatic pressure" from Nigerian authorities.

The agenda also covers religion, a transitional accord on a ceasefire, the definition of north and south Sudan and the possibility of a national referendum after a transition period, the sources said.

But the junta's team had been opposed on the ground that the SPLA plan meant separatism.

Government interim delegation leader Al Haj Mohammad said earlier: "We have agreed to the principle of an interim arrangement during which issues such as power sharing, welfare, human rights, sharing of natural resources can be worked out, but we are certainly not here to discuss confederation or self-determination."

The delegation of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which has been fighting for a decade to free mainly non-Muslim south Sudan from domination by the Islamic north, had insisted that a confederation should be discussed.

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Expellees extend sit-in

MARJ AL ZOHOOR, Lebanon (AP) — Nearly 400 Palestinian expellees squatted near Israel's forward-most military line in South Lebanon for a second day Tuesday to protest the resumption of Arab-Israeli peace talks.

Branding Yasser Arafat a U.S. collaborator, the 396 exiles also decided they would extend their protest into Wednesday, to denounce the talks in Washington.

Mr. Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), ordered the negotiators to return to the United States for the ninth round of talks, which was beginning Tuesday after a four-month break.

"We shall remain here through a third day to show the Palestinian collaborators with the United States that the people reject their tutelage," the exiles' spokesman Abdul Aziz Rantisi said.

"Those sitting with the Israelis at the Washington negotiating table have stabbed us in the back. They betrayed our cause and they will not escape the people's reckoning," said Dr. Rantisi, a Gaza physician.

The exiles launched their "martyrdom march" Monday to protest the return of the Palestinian delegation to the 17-month-old peace process before their repatriation.

Monday, they trudged out of their tent camp near the Lebanese army's southern-most lines towards the Israeli military checkpoint at Zommaraya on the northeast edge of Israel's self-styled "security zone."

When they came within eyesight of the Israelis, troops fired warning volleys.

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Syria says war looms if Mideast peace talks fail

DAMASCUS (Agencies) — Syria said Tuesday that failure of the ninth round of Middle East peace talks would bring the region to "the brink of new wars."

It urged Washington to keep its promise and play the role of full partner and honest broker in the latest round of talks opening in Washington Tuesday.

Damascus issued the twin appeal and warning through its official daily Tishreen, which reflects government thinking.

"It should be clear that failure of the ninth round (of talks) and a retraction of Washington from pledges it made would undermine the whole peace process and put the region on the brink of new wars, tension and bloody violence," it said.

Jordan has also warned that the Middle East will "slide towards an abyss" if peace talks fail.

King Hussein Friday said he believed the talks were close to a breakthrough but added: "If it is not resolved now I think that we will be sliding towards an abyss."

Syria played a major role in convincing the reluctant Palestinians to return to the talks, which resumed after four months of suspense caused by Israel's expulsion of 415 Palestinians in December.

The Palestinians returned without the concessions they demanded from Israel for speeding up the return of the expellees.

Tishreen said the Arabs — Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Palestinians — only agreed to go to Washington after assurances from the United States that it would act as a full and honest partner "unbiased to Israel."

"The ninth round will show the seriousness of the U.S. position and Washington's readiness to translate these slogans into specific steps," it said.

"We should say that these U.S. assurances encouraged the Arabs to participate in the ninth round because Arabs did not base any hopes on the Israeli position."

Tishreen said the Israeli government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin "does not want peace and is not seeking a just and comprehensive settlement."

"Arabs have done their bit to build a just peace and the world and the United States is now required to force Israel to comply with international will and accept U.N. resolutions. This would achieve a permanent peace," Tishreen said.

Al Thawra daily, another official newspaper, said the ninth round was a new start for the Middle East peace process launched in Madrid in October 1990.

The United States would be held responsible for the success of the second start of the Madrid conference "if we can describe it as this," Al Thawra said.

A third official daily, the English-language Syria Times, also urged Washington to lead the ninth round of talks to success or the chances for peace would disappear.

"Now, the time has come to speak louder. The United States has to play the role of full partner, and to be the driving force and stick to the terms of the original invitation and to its letter of assurances...otherwise the promise of peace which loomed once in the Middle East sky will vanish for ever."

Sarid: Golan should be returned. Israel must be ready to give up the Golan Heights in order to reach a lasting peace with Syria, Israeli Environment Minister Yossi Sarid said Monday.

Mr. Sarid, a member of the left-wing Meretz Party which is in coalition with the Labour Party of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, made the call on Israeli Television.

"It is impossible to conclude a lasting peace with Syria without announcing right now that Israel is ready to give up its sovereignty over Golan," he said.

"In exchange for the Golan Heights Israel must achieve total peace, which implies a normalisation of relations, an exchange of ambassadors and the opening of borders," Mr. Sarid added.

An Israeli pull-out could only be considered if these conditions were met, he said, and if Israel received "very strong security guarantees."

Mr. Sarid stressed he was expressing his party's opinion and that his comments were not a statement of official government policy.

Pope meets Hariri

In Vatican City Pope John Paul II and Lebanon's Prime Minister Rafik Hariri Monday discussed the Middle East peace process, the Vatican said.

Papal spokesman Joaquin Navarro said during the Pope's half-hour meeting with Mr. Hariri, the Lebanese leader wanted to thank the pontiff for his and the Vatican's "moral aid in the reconstruction of Lebanon."

Also discussed was "the Middle East peace process and the important role it played by the Holy See," Mr. Navarro said.

Mr. Darawshe, an Israeli citizen of Palestinian origin who founded the DAP in 1988, said Arabs voting in 1992 elections in Israel captured the highest number of seats in history in recent elections. He said the DAP gained 41,000 votes, granting it two seats.

"I believe it is reasonable to reach a ceasefire (between the Palestinians and Israelis) for six months, to give the peace process a chance to succeed," he said, pointing out that Syria, Jordan and Lebanon have had ceasefire agreements with Israel for 20 years.

Mr. Darawshe told reporters he has discussed the prospects of such an agreement with influential Israeli and Palestinian leaders, including Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Faisal Hussein, who heads the Palestinian delegation at the ninth round of talks.

"Distinguished Palestinians and Israelis with whom I met agreed" and will come to the talks with such a proposal, Mr. Darawshe said.

There is a need to discuss this issue on the table in the coming weeks... They had some nuances which they will discuss... but I believe there is a base for such a suggestion. I am hopeful they will reach this (accord)."

Asked what assurance he had that Palestinians would honour a ceasefire agreement, Mr. Darawshe said that in the past Palestinian violence has occurred "when people felt they had nothing to lose."

"If they feel a ceasefire will lead to a solution... give them a chance to have their sovereignty... autonomy... the massive majority will respect that and will feel it is in their interest." He said a political solution — based on the principle of land for peace, as set forth U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 — must be reached.

Mr. Darawshe said other actions in addition to the ceasefire are needed on the part of Israel to restore confidence and create an atmosphere that is conducive to the resumption of negotiations. He said Israel must agree to abide by U.N. Security Council Resolution 731, which calls for the repatriation of all deportees.

Pointing out that expulsion is a form of punishment in violation of the Geneva Convention, he called upon Israel to announce the return of 400 Palestinian deportees now in southern Lebanon and to give a commitment that Israel will not use deportation as a form of punishment again.

Mr. Darawshe also called on the Israeli government to institute a series of measures which he said are "critical to the success of talks": to improve the standard of living of Palestinians in the occupied territories, to stop the demolition of houses, and to encourage economic development, industrialisation and projects to provide jobs.

He said he has discussed with Arab, European and American leaders the need for more investment in the occupied territories "to increase the opportunities for jobs and to raise the standard of living of people who are suffering from real famine."

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Knesset member urges Palestinian-Israeli truce

WASHINGTON (USIA) — A member of the Israeli Knesset who is a leader of the Democratic Arab Party (DAP) says a ceasefire between Palestinians and Israelis is a critical first step toward bridging the gap between the two sides and resuming Middle East peace talks.

Appearing at a press conference here, Abdul Wahab Darawshe said he is "launching an initiative to end the violence... because I want to be the bridge of peace between our people — the Palestinians — and our country, Israel."

The news conference was sponsored by the National Association of Arab Americans.

Mr. Darawshe, an Israeli citizen of Palestinian origin who founded the DAP in 1988, said Arabs voting in 1992 elections in Israel captured the highest number of seats in history in recent elections. He said the DAP gained 41,000 votes, granting it two seats.

"I believe it is reasonable to reach a ceasefire (between the Palestinians and Israelis) for six months, to give the peace process a chance to succeed," he said, pointing out that Syria, Jordan and Lebanon have had ceasefire agreements with Israel for 20 years.

Mr. Darawshe told reporters he has discussed the prospects of such an agreement with influential Israeli and Palestinian leaders, including Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Faisal Hussein, who heads the Palestinian delegation at the ninth round of talks.

"Distinguished Palestinians and Israelis with whom I met agreed" and will come to the talks with such a proposal, Mr. Darawshe said.

There is a need to discuss this issue on the table in the coming weeks... They had some nuances which they will discuss... but I believe there is a base for such a suggestion. I am hopeful they will reach this (accord)."

Asked what assurance he had that Palestinians would honour a ceasefire agreement, Mr. Darawshe said that in the past Palestinian violence has occurred "when people felt they had nothing to lose."

"If they feel a ceasefire will lead to a solution... give them a chance to have their sovereignty... autonomy... the massive majority will respect that and will feel it is in their interest." He said a political solution — based on the principle of land for peace, as set forth U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 — must be reached.

Mr. Darawshe said other actions in addition to the ceasefire are needed on the part of Israel to restore confidence and create an atmosphere that is conducive to the resumption of negotiations. He said Israel must agree to abide by U.N. Security Council Resolution 731, which calls for the repatriation of all deportees.

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Egyptian communists see need for liberalisation

By Sausan Ghosheh
Special to the Jordan Times

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10 states to coordinate battle against drugs

NICOSIA (Agencies) — Officials of 10 member countries of a regional pact which included major drug producers Afghanistan and Pakistan have agreed to coordinate their fight against drugs, Iran's IRNA news agency reported.

It said anti-drug officials of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO), whose member states extend from China's borders to Europe, decided at the end of a two-day meeting in Tehran to exchange information on traffickers.

The chairman of the conference, Hajjatoleslam Ali Zargar of Iran, said an Iranian proposal to set up a joint fund for fighting drugs would be discussed at a future meeting in Baku, capital of Azerbaijan.

Iran's police chief General Reza Seifollahi told the conference Sunday that production of 3,000 to 3,500 tonnes of opium a year in South West Asia and international drug gangs active there posed a serious threat to the region, IRNA said.

Iran is greatly worried about poppy and hemp cultivation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Gen. Seifollahi said. Opium, morphine and heroin are extracted from poppies while hemp yields hashish.

Gen. Seifollahi said Iran had built 4,000 kilometre of roads and 70 outposts along its eastern borders in a bid to curb the smuggling of drugs into Iran and on to Europe.

Hajjatoleslam Zargar said Iranian agents seized 62 tonnes of drugs and arrested 45,000 traffickers and addicts in the year ended March 20. Iran imposes the death penalty for possession of 30 grammes of heroin or five kilogrammes of opium.

Most of the delegates — also from Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kirghizistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and northern Cyprus — blamed Afghanistan as the source

of the problem. They said drugs then departed for Europe through the two main transit routes of Iran-Turkey and Central Asia.

The collapse of the Soviet Union left "transparent borders" and made their countries a convenient drug route to Europe, also exposing Central Asian populations to unprecedented drug problems, they said.

Azerbaijani officials said young Azeris were abusing drugs more often than in the past and this was increasing crime.

Kazakhstan authorities reported the seizure of 12 tonnes of marijuana and 17 tonnes of opium in the last year and the arrests of 6,000 people on drug charges.

Kirghizistan said six tonnes of drugs were seized and 32 narcotics laboratories discovered in the past year. In addition, 1,900 drug-related crimes were recorded in a country with only 4.5 million people.

Turkmenistan acknowledged having similar problems and called for "through studies and efforts" to find the root of the problem in the region.

Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kirghizistan, Azerbaijan joined ECO in 1991 shortly after their independence.

Afghanistan blamed the drug problem on its long civil war, the incompetence of previous governments, its economic crisis and the international mafia and called for a religious crusade against "the plague."

Pakistan, widely considered to be a major drug producing country, also vowed to increase its fight against addicts and smugglers and said there were plans to turn poppy fields into land for other commodities.

But documents presented at the meeting showed that less than seven tonnes of drugs have been seized in Pakistan in the past year.

Experts say democracy making slow, steady gain

WASHINGTON (USIA) — Despite many obstacles and challenges, democracy and a respect for human rights are steadily taking hold in the Middle East, according to a group of Arab experts.

The experts spoke during a conference on the "Challenges to Democracy in the New Era," sponsored by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) April 26.

Human rights and democratic activists from nearly 60 countries, including the Dalai Lama from Tibet, attended the conference. NED is a private non-profit, grant-making agency created to strengthen democratic institutions around the world.

The panel addressing democratic prospects in the Middle East included:

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

King visits Akram Al Hourani

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Tuesday visited the house of the renowned Arab intellectual Akram Al Hourani and congratulated him on his safe arrival in Jordan, wishing him a happy stay in the country. Mr. Hourani voiced deep appreciation for the King's visit and wished him and Jordan further progress in the path of democracy, freedoms and human rights, which Jordan has charted for itself. The King was accompanied on the visit by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and Royal Court Chief Khalid Al Karaki.

Omani medical chief visits Army HQ, university

AMMAN (Petra) — Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces Lieutenant General Abdul Hafez Mirai Al Kaabneh received at his office Director of the Omani Royal Medical Services Brigadier Rafie Ben Hilal Ben Al Saud and the Omani delegation accompanying him. Lt. Gen. Kaabneh and the Omani guest discussed scopes of cooperation and exchange of expertise in the medical field. The Omani delegation later visited the University of Jordan, where they were briefed by its President Fawzi Gharaibeh on its development and achievements. Dr. Gharaibeh praised the brotherly relations between Jordan and Oman. The meeting was attended by Director of the Royal Medical Services in Jordan Maj. Gen. Yousef Qussous, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine Ala'a Tougan, and Director of the University of Jordan's hospital Samih Abu Al Ragheb. The delegation members toured the university and various sections of the hospital and expressed their admiration of the high standards the university has achieved.

Nabatean exhibit to open in Basle

AMMAN (Petra) — Under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor, a special exhibition of Nabatean antiquities, organised by the Antiquities Department, will be held Thursday in Basle, Switzerland. On display at the exhibition will be the latest archaeological discoveries found by Swiss teams during their digs in Zantour, a site in Petra, as well as Um Al Walid and Um Al Rasas in Madaba. To prepare for the exhibition, Antiquities Department Director General Safwan Al Tal Tuesday left for Switzerland at the head of a delegation including Fawzi Zayadin and Sulaiman Farajat.

Ministry negotiates release of ship

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Foreign Ministry and the U.S. government were negotiating Tuesday the release of an Aqaba-bound cargo vessel with goods for Jordanian markets. The Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported that U.S. naval forces intercepted the ship at the Straits of Tiran Monday as part of the U.N. policy of sanctions against Iraq. The ship was prevented from continuing to Aqaba because its captain was a Yugoslav national, Petra reported. The Malta flag ship is the fourth to be intercepted and prevented from continuing to its Aqaba destination. A Sudanese flag ship was intercepted on April 19 and two vessels were intercepted on April 17 and 14.

Deputy Premier meets with visiting Cypriot delegation

AMMAN (Petra) — Deputy Prime Minister and Transport Minister Ali Suheimat Tuesday received a Cypriot delegation representing the Ministry of Communications and Public Works, headed by Michael Antonio, the ministry's assistant secretary general. The delegation briefed Dr. Suheimat on the outcome of the talks they held with Jordanian officials over the last two days. Talks focused on bilateral cooperation in the area of land transport and transit. The meeting was attended by the Ministry Secretary General Awad Al Tal.

Interior ministry approves Tafleeh council

TAFLEEH (Petra) — Interior Minister Jawdat Al Shoul Tuesday endorsed the formation of a consultative council in Tafleeh governorate, headed by the governor and including Lower House of Parliament members from the governorate, representatives of the municipal and village councils, chambers of commerce and industry, the banking sector, representatives for societies, clubs, cooperatives, doctors, engineers, advocates and labourers. Tafleeh Governor Mohammad Al Talhouni, who heads the council, said it held its first meeting at the beginning of week, during which it discussed budgets of the projects proposed for later this year and plans of the social and service sectors for the next ten years. Talking about the council's composition, Mr. Talhouni said it is a local consultative council, representing all voluntary and non-governmental organisations. The council's term is for three years. It was formed in response to directives from His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan during a recent visit to Tafleeh governorate.

RJ team on Scandinavian fact-finding trip

COPENHAGEN (Petra) — A Royal Jordanian (RJ) team, headed by the executive director's assistant for economic research Ghada Badr, Tuesday concluded a ten-day fact-finding tour in the Scandinavian countries, aimed at promoting tourism to Jordan and air transport with Scandinavian countries. In a statement to a Petra correspondent here, Ms. Badr said the tour was aimed at undertaking a feasibility study on reoperating RJ flights to Scandinavian countries and building working relations between Scandinavian travel and tourist agents and their counterparts in Jordan, with a view to encouraging Scandinavian tourists to visit Jordan's touristic attractions and archaeological sites. Ms. Badr was accompanied on her tour by the RJ representative in the Scandinavian countries and its Copenhagen station manager, Maha Bitar. The tour included Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland.

Former U.S. senator to visit Jordan

AMMAN (Petra) — Former U.S. Senator George McGovern will arrive here May 4 on a three-day visit to Jordan, during which he will hold talks with Jordanian officials on issues related to the U.S. policy in the Middle East. Mr. McGovern heads the U.S. Council of Middle East Policies. The council seeks to ensure a better understanding of the Middle East issues.

Egyptian hangs for murder

AMMAN (J.T.) — A 34-year-old Egyptian man, convicted of theft and murder, was hanged in the central prison at Swaga, 100 kilometres south of Amman, police officials said Tuesday.

Saber Abdul Hameed Al Abed was executed Sunday, they said. The officials said Abed was convicted and sentenced to death for killing a middle-aged woman in Irbid, in July 1989.

Case records said he broke into the woman's house while she and her children were sleeping and stole her gold bracelets, and rings.

Before he was able to escape, the woman woke up, and Abed struck her on the head with a large stone.

He ran away while his victim bled to death. Police refused to give the woman's name. But a report in Al Dustour Arabic daily identified the woman as Ibtisam Ibrahim Al Shafi.

Abed reportedly fled to Egypt after the crime. He returned two years later on a forged passport to seek work in Jordan.

At least three people have been hanged this year in Jordan, an unusually high number for the Kingdom whose security officials report a low-crime rate.

Labour delegation returns from Tehran

AMMAN (Petra) — Ministry of Labour Secretary General Saleh Tarawneh Tuesday returned home after taking part in the 13th Conference of Labour Ministers in Asia and the Pacific countries, which concluded in Tehran on April 23.

Upon arrival, Mr. Tarawneh said the conference issued a statement stressing the need for development of human resources as the key to economic progress.

The conference called for adopting effective strategies and mechanisms of work to overcome unemployment and poverty and improve living conditions.

Mr. Tarawneh said the conference highlighted the importance of education, training and vocational and technical education in enhancing capacities to develop human resources and ensure agricultural development.

The statement called on Asian countries to direct special attention to the social dimension of economic development when preparing economic programmes and applying economic adjustment plans.

Jordan exposes housing dilemma in occupied lands

NAIROBI (Petra) — Jordan's delegate to the 14th meeting of the U.N. Centre for Human Settlements held in Nairobi, Kenya Tuesday said that Israel's demolition of Arab homes in the occupied Arab lands and its ban on Arabs building their own homes were partly responsible for the lack of sufficient homes for the growing population.

The occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip are densely populated, one-sixth of the population lives five persons to a single room, one-quarter of the population lacks proper drinking water and sanitation and one-fifth of them do not have electricity, said Yousef Hiyasat who is also director of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Restricted freedoms, confiscation of Arab lands and other arbitrary action on the part of the Israeli authorities have led to the deterioration of living conditions and housing facilities in the Arab lands and increased the ordeal of the Palestinian people, Mr. Hiyasat added in his address to the meeting.

Referring to Jordan, Mr. Hiyasat said the country adopted a housing strategy in 1988 but implementation was delayed because of the Gulf crisis.

It was only last year that the Kingdom started practical steps to implement the strategy which aims to provide limited income groups with proper housing, said Mr. Hiyasat.

Apart from the department of housing, the government has opened the way for the private sector to contribute to solving housing problems and has recently reached an agreement with the U.S. Agency of International Development (USAID) to help implement housing programmes, Mr. Hiyasat said.

He added that USAID was providing a \$50 million loan to Jordan to help the department execute its housing programmes.

Fuheisis to take pollution concerns to Royal Court

By Elia Nasrallah
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — In pursuing the drive to rid their town of pollution from the poisonous fumes and falling cement dust, the people of Fuheis now plan to take the matter to the Royal Court and the Prime Ministry's office.

A committee representing the townspeople told the Jordan Times that the pollution from the cement factory has been affecting their health with the continual fall of dust and poisonous fumes on their homes, gardens and streets.

The committee said it intends to see the help of His Majesty King Hussein and Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker in dealing with the danger of dust that, they say, has overwhelmed their entire life.

A few weeks ago, hundreds of Fuheisis staged a sit-in at the cement factory in a show of protest against the continued fall out, and the committee had earlier written to the Lower House of Parliament and met with some of its members to air their grievances, said Issa Okla who heads the committee.

Mr. Okla told the Jordan Times that parliament members promised to do something about the situation and to see to it that the Jordan Cement Factory Company (JCFC) installs additional filters to minimise the amount of dust and fumes; but nothing has been done so far.

He said the committee has now distributed leaflets addressed to the public appealing for help to end the danger.

"It is our right to breathe pure air," read the title of the leaflet which was also distributed to the press.

"We, the representatives of Fuheis, announce that we will pursue various methods, including sit-ins, to protest to the concerned authorities in order to achieve our rights to uncontaminated air," the leaflet said.

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Mr. Okla told the Jordan Times that parliament members promised to do something about the situation and to see to it that the Jordan Cement Factory Company (JCFC) installs additional filters to minimise the amount of dust and fumes; but nothing has been done so far.

He said the committee has now distributed leaflets addressed to the public appealing for help to end the danger.

"It is our right to breathe pure air," read the title of the leaflet which was also distributed to the press.

"We, the representatives of Fuheis, announce that we will pursue various methods, including sit-ins, to protest to the concerned authorities in order to achieve our rights to uncontaminated air," the leaflet said.

Mr. Okla said the committee

Fuheisis to take pollution concerns to Royal Court

By Elia Nasrallah
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — In pursuing the drive to rid their town of pollution from the poisonous fumes and falling cement dust, the people of Fuheis now plan to take the matter to the Royal Court and the Prime Ministry's office.

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Ministry of Transport Secretary General Awad Tal (right) and Assistant Minister of Public Works in Cyprus Michael Antonio Tuesday sign a protocol agreement on land transport and transit operations (Petra photo)

Jordan, Cyprus sign draft transport protocol

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan and Cyprus Monday signed a protocol on cooperation in land transport and transit operations which provides for the transportation of goods and passengers to and from the two countries, as well as transportation of Cypriot goods through Jordanian territory to other Arab countries.

The protocol also encourages national maritime companies in Jordan and Cyprus to transport trucks and buses from Cyprus and Jordan to the nearest ports in the relevant Arab countries.

Ministry of Transport Secretary General Awad Tal and Assistant Minister of Public Works in Cyprus Michael Antonio signed the protocol.

Mr. Tal said the agreement was only a draft which is still to be ratified by the concerned ministers in both countries.

He said cooperation in the transportation of goods and passengers will be subjected to the countries' rules and regulations, but is likely to reflect positively

on the two countries' economies. The protocol, Mr. Tal added, will definitely benefit Jordanian truckers who will be involved in transit operations.

He told the Jordan Times that the agreement means that Jordanian trucks carrying goods from Jordan or other Arab states can be ferried to Cyprus and continue on to their destinations there.

On the return trip, these trucks will be permitted to carry Cypriot or European goods to be ferried back to the nearest Arab or Turkish ports, and continue over land to Jordan or beyond, he said.

The Cypriot government is more concerned to see the agreement implemented as Cyprus has significantly fewer trucks than Jordan, Mr. Tal said.

Jordan with 5,000 trucks, stands to do a lucrative business, according to Mr. Tal.

He said the draft agreement is now awaiting Cabinet approval before the concerned ministers can sign the deal.

Carment Trio to jazz it up

By Jean-Claude Elias
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Philippe Carment is back in Amman. The pianist gave superb performances last fall, and the city's jazz lovers will certainly be looking forward to more listening pleasure from his music.

The Philippe Carment Trio is presented by the National Music Conservatory/Noor Al Hussein Foundation and the French Cultural Centre in Amman.

The concert is scheduled for Thursday, April 29 at 8:00 p.m. at the Royal Cultural Centre (RCC).

Carment plays traditional piano jazz but with a strong and pleasant modern touch.

His trio, Jean-Benoit Culot on drums, Lionel Guillemin on up-

right bass and himself on acoustic piano, deliver a very dassy and polished sound.

Carment's music talks to those who "like 'good old'" Dave Brubeck of the fifties and modern French virtuoso Michel Petruccianni alike.

In this sense, his jazz style can be qualified — but not labeled — as classical. Some of his compositions remind the listener of Brazilian pianist Eliane Elias.

As a genuine jazzman, Carment's improvisations are an undeniable proof of his creativity. But the listener is always able to follow the pianist through his improvisational path.

Carment doesn't try to "lose" his audience as some jazz musicians like to do — he obviously

plays for the audience and not just for himself.

The trio's first album, "The Bill Please," is a master piece and has been rightfully rewarded as such.

From the brilliant and original rhythm of "Comparison" to the singing theme of "Comme Tu Veux," the subtle harmonies of "Trio Eclosion," the Brazilian flavoured "Interpellation" and the amazing drums of "Definitif," Philippe Carment playing is a tasteful display of versatility, elegance and virtuosity.

In a jazz world crowded with talented pianists, "making the difference" is not an easy task.

The only way to check it for yourself is to be at the Trio's concert Thursday at the RCC.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

- ★ Art exhibition entitled "The Legend of Petra II" by artist Suha Shoman at the National Gallery for Fine Arts.
- ★ Art exhibition by Samia Al Zar and Adnan Yalwa at the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation Gallery.
- ★ Exhibition of prints, entitled "Architectural Motifs from the Arab World," by Rima Farah at The Gallery, Hotel Jordan Intercontinental.
- ★ Exhibition of watercolour paintings by Lebanese artist Randa Berouti at Romero Restaurant.
- ★ Exhibition of ceramics by Margaret Tadros at the Spanish Cultural Centre.
- ★ Art exhibition by Dr. Laila Bustami at the Royal cultural Centre.

- ★ Art exhibition by Jordanian artist Ahmad Nawash at the French Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition of sculptures by Syrian artist Aktham Abdul Hameed at Baladna Art Gallery.
- ★ Art exhibition by Syrian Artist Yousef Abdelke at Al Balka'a Gallery, Al Fuheis city.
- ★ Art exhibition entitled "Fragments: Weavings and Works on Paper" by Kevin A. Hluch and Margaret M. Hluch at the American Centre.
- ★ Flower show of the Ikebana International Club of Jordan at the Royal Cultural Centre (5 p.m. — 8 p.m.)
- ★ Lecture, in Arabic, on German writer Heinrich Böll's life, work, literature and reception in the Arab World by Dr. Abdo Abboud of the University of Homs at Yarmouk University's Faculty of Arts at 11 a.m.


Art work inspired by Jordan on display

AMMAN (J.T.) — Art work produced on paper by Kevin A. Hluch and weavings by Margaret M. Hluch will be on display at the Exhibitions Gallery of the American Embassy.

The exhibition "Fragments: Weavings and Works on Paper" will run from April 28 to May 26 and is open to the general public from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The artists were inspired in their work by the historical pottery found throughout Jordan.

Kevin Hluch, who is a visiting Fulbright Lecturer at Ar in Yarmouk University in Irbid, is exhibiting imaginative and reconstructive drawings on paper executed in conte pencil, a form of pastel, that reflect his love of pottery, abstract shapes, texture, and colour.



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Human rights — nothing less, nothing more

ALTHOUGH MUCH hope is being placed on the U.N. World Conference on Human Rights, scheduled to begin in Vienna next June, there are growing fears that the international meeting might be a disappointment after all. The conference could in fact be a failure if the gap between the perspectives of the developed and developing countries could be bridged and met. The major anxiety is centred on the efforts of the power states to dilute human rights standards on the grounds that their economic conditions do not allow for observing the existing human rights norms in current circumstances, and to international human rights instruments. The rich world is already accusing underdeveloped countries of attempting to exploit the platform of Vienna for launching a campaign for greater international attention and instead of concentrating on their rights, encourage per se.

On the other hand, there are basic civil and political rights that must not await full economic development. These rights are respected and implemented, there are no categories of important human rights that require a minimum level of socio-economic development before they can be expected to be honoured and observed.

The current problem facing the Vienna conference is that the two sides are truly talking with the other one, but each on their own respective terms and interpretation of what should be the basis of the gathering on human rights. Many preliminary meetings were held in the course of the year in order to agree on an agenda. The last time that some developing countries with poor human rights records have come up with calls for more the commitment to the "particularities" of the country, historical, religious and cultural, in order to achieve the existing international human rights norms.

The dilemma is a two-edged sword that requires wisdom and wisdom before it can be taken up and adopted and applied in the domain of human rights. Taken to its full logical conclusion, such argument may end up destroying the universality of human rights conventions that were painstakingly negotiated and adopted in the last few decades.

The essence of the world, both rich and poor, must have a common goal. We either have a universal declaration of human rights or we do not. The minute a state begins to entertain the proposition that it has its own particularities that can be added to justify a lower human rights record, that state could enter in a new era of weaker human rights. That one never, the intention of the Vienna conference is to achieve a common goal, as the West would say, and pursuing such a goal would render the Vienna endeavour counterproductive at best.

LEADER PERSPECTIVES COMMENTARIES

All the participants starting the ninth round of talks with the Arab League in Washington Tuesday realised that they have arrived at a negotiating table voluntarily but were driven there by some force. The Arab League and the Israeli will, this time, keep their word and act in a way to help the negotiators attain success. At the Arab League daily, commenting on the resumption of the negotiations in Washington, the paper said that the Arab League members, that they went to Washington at a time when the Arab League was in a state of despair and pessimism about the outcome of the talks in view of Israel's intransigence and in light of U.S. support for the aggressor. The Arab members realise that the negotiators are talking to murderers and occupiers of Arab lands. They are not, nonetheless, they are there to give the Arab League and the Americans one more chance, it said. In the Arab view, should these talks prove futile this time and end in failure, the alternative is a new surge of real Arab and Islamic unity, irreparable in its dimensions and consequences. The Arab League said that the Arab parties went to Washington this time in the full belief that the Arab Nation is keen on achieving peace with Israel, but such peace could end should the Israelis continue to show negative response. What the Arab League and the whole region need now, said the paper, is real peace and U.N. resolutions and the international legitimacy.

THE UNITED NATIONS Arab daily voiced appreciation of a decision by the Arab League to exempt local farmers from paying up to 4.5 million in interest on their loans. Tareq Masarweh said this step will not only encourage the local farmers to take up the loans, but also encourage them to the Agricultural Credit Corporation and other money-lending institutions. But the writer said that the government now should also deal with the farmers facing the Jordan Cooperative Organisation (JCO) who lost the farmers' money and is unable to retrieve the loan, estimated at JD 24 million. The government ought to help the JCO to retrieve its money and to pay back its loans to the banks and cooperative societies from which it had borrowed the money to give the farmers, said the writer. Masarweh also demanded that the Ministry of Agriculture set up a special agricultural and marketing system enabling farmers to sell their crops and to export and saving the country from the economic problems revolving around the farmers' debts. The writer urged the prime minister to intervene, back these views and to end these problems.

Economic Forum

By Dr. Abdalla Malki

Tale of two economic measures

The two measures under question are currency devaluation and free import policy.

Back in 1986, when the devaluation of the dinar was only a twinkle in the eyes of two or three persons in Jordan, this author published an article in one of Jordan's two dailies (Al Dustour, 26 Oct. 1986) warning very strongly against such devaluation. My argument was based on the following reasons:

- Jordan's export base is very narrow.
- Devaluation will entice capital flight and cause remittances of Jordanians working abroad to dry up.
- It will force further devaluations.
- Devaluation will lead to inflation, literally, I wrote, that inflation was the only guaranteed product of devaluation.

What followed is well-known history. The dinar was devalued, remittances dried up and capital started to migrate from Jordan. Instead of the initially perceived devaluation percentage of 10 per cent the dinar lost 50 per cent of its exchange rate. Imports had grown at an average annual rate of five per cent in the four-year period following the devaluation, after falling at an average annual rate of two per cent in the four years preceding it, in a very sharp contrast to the devaluation theory. Inflation jumped by 60 per cent in the same four years. At the time, nobody wanted to believe me; nobody seemed to believe something said by a Jordanian who claimed to have some knowledge of development economics.

Now let us read what the "Economist" wrote in a leading commentary in its issue of April 3, 1993 in the context of appraising the economic experience of Argentina and Mexico: "Exchange rate theory for developed countries has been turned on its head in recent years. In the 1980s, the IMF insisted that countries devalue their currencies regularly to remain competitive and so to eliminate trade deficits. In fact, this fuelled inflation, while any gain in competitiveness was short-lived." The devaluation of the Jordan dinar shattered our economy to the point where we had to go, hat in hand, to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and to the extent where no economic policy manager now dares to mention the word "devaluation" in the context of the policy measures perceivable in the short, medium or long runs. But wait a minute!

The International Monetary Fund devised a scheme to remedy our economy and enable us repay our external debt. This is the famous economic adjustment programme which is based on rescheduling our debt, that is postponing its repayment until the turn of the next century.

Another very basic part of this programme is the adoption of a free import policy. This is a fatal defect in the programme and consequently I have been warning against it, as I did in 1986 regarding exactly the destructive effects of devaluation. Again nobody seems to heed this advice and I am very fearful that a story similar to the devaluation episode will be repeated, some time during the next few years.

My argument is that developing countries cannot afford open-door import policies because the fruits of any economic progress they achieve will be channelled to the rest of the world through the open door of imports. The demand for imports rises as income grows. Even when poverty is apparent, income in developing countries is already concentrated or gets concentrated as development proceeds to the extent that it leads to high demand for imports at large and for luxury items in particular with and without the presence of poverty.

Actually, the commentary of the "Economist" pointed out that there were growing doubts about the sustainability of the success achieved by Argentina and Mexico in fields such as growth and inflation (similar, interestingly enough, to the success achieved last year by Jordan). And significantly enough, the "Economist" states that the major reason for these doubts was the "ballooning current-account deficits."

Now, a current account deficit is mainly generated by imports of goods and services which are greatly stimulated by free import policies. Short-term capital movements may dampen these deficits in the early stages of the adjustment programmes, but cannot do that for a longer period. At some point, the crisis strikes.

Again I warn against the catastrophic long-term effects of a free-import policy. I hope that I am on the wrong side this time although the behaviour of our imports of goods and services in 1992 and the early months of 1993 does confirm my fears.

Power vs. persuasion

Peace talks must have the collective sponsorship of the U.N.

By Clovis Maksoud

The Arab parties have returned to peace talks in deference to U.S. power rather than persuasion. This is due, in part, to the fact that the U.S. views any small Israeli concession as a major concession.

It is further exacerbated by the fact that the U.S. specifically pushes the Arabs and especially the Palestinians in a position where they must choose between the maximum Rabin will give and the minimum — nothing — from Likud. It is this attitude that led the U.S. into pressuring the aggrieved parties while practically shielding the violator of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the U.N. resolutions and even declared U.S. policy.

The Arab parties came to the ninth round at great risk to their credibility, effectiveness, and perhaps the durability of their leadership. The risk is, however, calculated. They need from the U.S. not the habitual assurances of an active involvement; instead they need a clear strategic vision that insures a rational and feasible outcome. If the U.S. conceptualises the outcome it envisages, the peace process ceases to be "peace talks" and becomes peace negotiations. Besides, this strategic vision must be coterminous with what the international community, through the U.N., has prescribed in a multitude of supposedly binding resolutions.

To persist in repeating that the U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 are the basis for the U.S. sponsored peace process without being forthcoming as to their precise meaning constitutes an American license for Israel to further procrastinate, delay, and derail. True, the Rabin govern-

ment has not repeated Sharmir's assertion that withdrawal from Sinai constituted compliance, but neither has it provided any outline of what it considers "compliance."

This deliberate ambiguity is a product of an Israeli strategy to stall, to buy time, to establish new facts on the ground and finally to forestall the chance for any substantial recovery of Arab territories or realise any legitimate national rights for the Palestinians. All this can be done without Israel saying so.

The dilemma lies in the fact that Arab parties know this; the U.S. knows this. What the U.S. is doing is to blur this awareness so that the agenda unravels mildly instead of cruelly; gently instead of aggressively. Does this have to be the U.S. role? I do not believe so. I think that the U.S. has a historical opportunity to put an end to this diplomatic charade and what is becoming an exercise in futility.

There is a way out but it entails boldness. The U.S. should consider that the nine rounds have laid the ground for obtaining a measure of understanding about the complexity of the issues that lay at the root of the conflict. After the ninth round the U.S. should take the portfolio of the peace talks to the U.N. Security Council. That is where it belongs and that is where it will

be resolved. Let met explain why.

In order to induce the Palestinians to return to the peace talks many Arab governments invested a great deal of their diminishing political cre-

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dit. They were prompted to do so by the U.S., and while Israel remains adamant on the substantive issues, Secretary Christopher recently showed some understanding of the Palestinian dilemma and their tragic circumstances. In return for Palestinian participation was promise of alleviating their collective pain but not a corresponding promise of realising their national rights. Faced with Arab governments weighing in and Israel harden-

ing its repressive measures and seige, the PLO also took a calculated risk and joined the official Arab consensus on the need to acquiesce to American summons.

While Rabin stated that no further deportation is envisaged, he affirmed that Israel retains the right to deport and this threatens to remain a time bomb in as much as it signals continued Israeli claims on the occupied territories. Now that the talks have resumed, the U.S. must prepare for a contingency plan which enables the U.N. to address this issue thoroughly and in accordance to its relevant resolutions. The U.N. is no longer what it used to be when the U.S. shielded Israel from U.N. sanctions. The U.S. is no longer isolated on its views of the Middle East at the U.N. Israel should no longer remain an exception to the rule of international law and U.N. resolutions.

In the most optimistic expectation the ninth round will bring minor relief but no resolution, let alone a serious breakthrough. This means that the tenth round must have a collective sponsorship of the U.N. Security Council. This will safeguard the process, sustain the Arab establishment's credit, provide the U.S. further opportunity to demonstrate commitment to the U.N. If this step is taken, the U.S. will continue to play the pivotal role as a great power and cease to play a unilateral role as a big power.

The writer, who now lives and teaches in Washington D.C., is a former representative of the Arab League at the U.N. He contributed the above article to the Jordan Times.

LETTERS

Rights and responsibilities

To the Editor:

The hottest issue to hit the political scene in Jordan has been the drastic steps taken by the Jordanian government towards achieving democracy.

The words democracy and democratisation discussions, become the new buzz words in parliamentary discussions, political party agendas, magazines, newspapers, and theatrical plays.

The Jordanians in general seem to have quickly got accustomed to this word as a regular part of their lives. We have been quick to cling to the word "democracy" when trying to justify the "rights" we feel we must be granted under this new system of government.

However, we tend to sometimes conveniently ignore the fact that along with the rights granted to us we also inherit many difficult and challenging responsibilities. For our rights and responsibilities under a democracy are not mutually exclusive. If we are to demand our rights related to democracy, we must be willing to shoulder the responsibilities that go along with it. We must also guard against the temptation of becoming self-righteous, finger-pointing critics who use the freedoms granted under a democracy as a platform to criticise others in order to cover up our own inadequacies.

In my opinion, American President Theodore Roosevelt was able to accurately sum up the true essence of democracy when he said: "In the battle of life it is not the critic that counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the door of the deed could have done better; the credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marked by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again because there is no effort without error or shortcoming; who does actually strive to do the deeds, who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows the triumph of high achievement and at worst if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who have tasted neither victory nor defeat."

Dr. Aida Dabbas,
Amman.

'Objective picture'

To the Editor:

I refer to the article "JPMC net profit drops sharply" (Jordan Times, April 22, 1993), and would like to thank Mr. Samir Shafiq for his keen interest in JPMC's activities and financial results. However, it would have been much more appreciated if Mr. Shafiq had dealt with this matter taking into account in his analysis all factors related to the points raised in his article, to give the readers an objective picture instead of the gloomy one which the article reflected.

It is true that the net profit in 1992 dropped to JD 16.1 million, against JD 33.1 in 1991. But it is necessary to point out here the reasons for this drop which are due to the following facts:

— In spite of the fact that Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) increased the volume of its sales in 1992, as compared to 1991, the total world phosphate exports dropped from 31.4 million tonnes in 1991 to 28.1 m/t in 1992; and although the share of JPMC in the world phosphate market increased in 1992 to reach 15.3 per cent, as compared to 13.7 per cent in 1991, thus putting Jordan in the position of the second largest exporter of rock phosphate in the world after Morocco, replacing the U.S. in this position, the total value of its sales decreased to reach JD 206.1 million, compared to JD 218 million in 1991 due to the sharp drop in international prices. This drop in prices was due mainly to the decrease in demand in European countries, and in particular East European countries, which led to more competition in other markets, especially the Asian countries.

Due to all these factors total value of sales decreased by JD 12.5 million.

- Increase in a number of expenditure items mainly: Transportation cost: JD 1.5 million.
- Axle load fines: JD 2.5 million.
- Provisions for doubtful debts (mainly Yugoslavia): JD 2.8 million.

Interest caused by a higher size in used overdraft facilities: JD 0.7 million, as well as debiting the profit and loss account with interest related to loans used to finance projects before their capitalisation, JD 1.9 million, in compliance with generally accepted accounting principles.

Depreciation expenses of fixed assets as a result of capitalising.

Other expenses which affected the end results of 1992, attributed mainly to the normal increase in salaries and other fringe benefits offered by JPMC to its employees; JD 3.6 million.

As for the loss incurred by the fertilizer unit, it was due to the sharp drop in fertilizer prices because of large quantities of fertilizers offered by big producers at very low prices.

Mr. Shafiq's article omitted a number of other positive aspects such as:

1. Increase of production from 4.9 million tonnes in 1991 to 5.2 million tonnes in 1992.
2. Through its sales, JPMC generated \$305 million as hard currency and participated in easing the unemployment problem by employing 350 employees in 1992.
3. JPMC paid JD 72.3 million to the government treasury and other public institutions in the form of dividends, taxes, direct and indirect fees, etc., out of which JD 23.5 million represents mining fees and fines.

It would have been appreciated if the reporter referred to some important issues mentioned in the Annual Report such as:

- Joint-venture projects with an Indian company, and another with a consortium of Japanese companies.
- Rehabilitation of the fertilizer complex in Aqaba, costing \$30 million, which will increase the capacity of phosphoric acid by 25 per cent to reach 420,000 tonnes.
- Introducing the countertrade activities and other ways of payments in markets which face difficulties in having foreign exchange to pay for their purchases and to settle their outstanding debts.

Finally, I would like to emphasise the keen interest of JPMC management to exert all possible efforts to overcome all difficulties and impediments resulting from uncontrollable political and economic factors.

We hope that this clarification would give you and the readers a clear and better picture of JPMC, the challenges it faces, and the better future prospects it aims at.

Thabet Taher,
Managing Director,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.



Peres: It is for us to solve our problems courageously and realistically

The following interview with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres appeared in the April 23, 1993, issue of the Jerusalem Post.



Shimon Peres

The upcoming talks
A lot of things have changed since last December, when Israelis and Arabs last held talks. The new Clinton administration is talking about becoming a "full partner" in the peace process. There's greater Palestinian dissent in the territories. The Likud now has a spokesman, with the election of Benjamin Netanyahu. How might all this have affected the talks?

Today the situation is more complicated than it was a few months ago. Undoubtedly. And yet the occasion is here. And I think as far as Israel is concerned, we have to tell our public some facts of life: In these negotiations, Israel has unavoidably been more on the giving side than the Palestinians, for the simple reason that the Palestinians have very little to offer.

It's an asymmetrical negotiation?
It's an asymmetrical negotiation. There is no sense in creating false expectations. You cannot come to the Palestinians and say we will give you part of the West Bank if you give us part of the West Bank. The West Bank is in our hands, not their hands. By definition, that is an asymmetrical situation.

Secondly, much depends upon us. And we should not look around to others to solve our problems. It is for us to solve our problems courageously and realistically. The price of peace is almost set. So, we have to concentrate more on the nature of peace. That's where the real opportunities are.

Where should the public look for progress? In your view, what would be a realistic goal for this round?

To conclude an agreement on autonomy.

In this round?

Yes. (We can clear up) at least most of the disputed issues.

You think that's possible?

I think it is needed. And I don't exclude that this can be attained.

You're saying that you think that by the end of this round the basic outlines of autonomy will be agreed upon?

Yes.

Do the negotiations have to be accelerated because of the recent violence?

Not only the violence, the opposition... Timing here is crucial. That's been my feeling about it from the very beginning. Not just to advance, but to advance quickly is a must.

Have you got any indication from the Americans and the Palestinians that things are ripe enough for that sort of progress in this round?

I am not going to speak on their behalf. I think as far as we are concerned, we have decided really to try our best to reach an agreement.

What about the U.S. role? How would that make a difference?

The Americans themselves said this time they are a facilitator and bridge builder, not a mediator or a conciliator. You know, every time you start the negotiations, you don't have to return to Mount Sinai and come back with 10 commandments. You have to

be pragmatic about it... You have to see where you want to arrive and act accordingly. But every time to issue a list of rules and conditions seems childish to me.

There was a special debate in the Knesset, with the Likud complaining that Israel is not making any demands on the Palestinians to stop the violence. How do you respond? Perhaps Faisal Husseini can't stop Hamas, but why can't he stop the "Fateh Hawks"?

The problem is that the people we are negotiating with cannot stop the shooting. We don't negotiate with the ones who shoot. If you make a condition that those who are shooting will stop shooting, you will make them the real partners and you hand over the negotiations to the terrorists.

You have reportedly met Hussein several times. What is your measure of the man? Can he make difficult decisions?

I would not like to make any personal remarks. To be a leader in war is one thing, to be a leader

in peace is another thing. When you are a leader at war, people applaud you if you win and curse you if you lose. But when you are negotiating, people never applaud you when you make concessions. They may applaud you (only) when you reach peace. So I appreciate the delicate situations of all the leaders in the negotiations.

Final status talks

You said earlier that the price of peace is set, meaning everyone knows what the final status talks will be about.

Yes, more or less.

Do you mean a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation?

In my judgment, yes.

So if the final outcome is basically agreed upon, why don't we get to the crux of it already?

Because then we will marry two negotiations under the same huppa.

What's wrong with that?

If we should start to negotiate

today the nature of the permanent solution while we are negotiating the interim solution, we shall discover that we have two very tough negotiations without a chance to agree on them.

I say that in order to deal with the permanent solution, we have to create another climate. I see the interim solution a voyage from a cold climate to a Mediterranean climate. For that reason I look upon the interim solution not in terms of geography but in terms of time. The necessary time that is really needed.

But wouldn't you agree that the recent waves of violence have shown that facts on the ground can overwhelm what happens at the table? Isn't it better to start planning where this voyage is going to end up?

Planning, yes. But agreeing is impossible because under the present climate we cannot reach an agreement about the map. Let's face it. If we start with the shores we want to arrive at, we shall discover that we cannot agree on the voyage. In order to agree on the map we will need time.

The closure of the occupied territories

I think you've said publicly, that the economic realities are such that the current closure cannot last. It's going to have to be lifted. Can you envision establishing a link between the restrictions and

the violence? For example, decide that the workers will be let back in, but announce that if an Israeli is killed, say, 10,000 workers will be cut back. That would make it clear they'll have to pay an economic price for violence.

Well, I don't think that whenever there was an act of violence all two million people in the territories were asked permission first. So I don't adopt the idea of the collective punishment. Furthermore, as long as we are responsible for the territories, we are responsible not only for the being but for the well-being of the people, and we shouldn't push them at this stage to a state of starvation, of unemployment or horror.

I am less concerned about the Israeli economy... Today 93 per cent, 94 per cent of the workers are Israeli. The people that are coming from the territories represent not more than 6-7 per cent at best.

I cannot imagine we should tell them that your workers don't have the right to come to our side and yet we shall remain the policemen on your side. It is either-or. Either the responsibility is divided or the responsibility is shared. But you cannot have it half and half. I look on the closure as a temporary measure. It wasn't planned. It was taken as a reaction to an impossible situation and it was an understandable reaction.

We have to play it by ear. It has had some side effects which are important. For example, the Israeli public today does now

sense what it means to work together but live separately, to have the Palestinians run their life in their places with us running our lives in our places. That's a great advantage.

So do you mean that you want to lift this pretty soon?

I think gradually this will be lifted.

Over the next month?

I don't know. I don't want to predict.

Negotiations with the Syrians

Let's turn to Syria for a second. The prime minister has made it clear that he would prefer movement on the Syrian front, which he believes would promote movement on the Palestinian front. How likely is progress with the Syrians?

Difficulties you have on both fronts. The difference is in the nature of the difficulties, not in their existence. And I think wherever we can move, we have to. We shouldn't link progress on one to progress on the other because then you will end up linking the lack of progress to the other. And if you can move ahead with the Palestinians, fine, let's move ahead. If you can

move ahead with the Syrians, fine, let's move ahead.

Generally, what is interesting is that the Arabs are discovering their main problem is not what comes from the outside, namely from Israel, but what happens within each of their countries. And apart from Egypt, most of the countries are being governed by minorities and by brutal authoritarianism. The ones who endanger them are the fundamentalists, not the Israelis.

How do you explain that the Palestinians are so good in reading the Israeli domestic situation, but the Syrians are not?

The Syrians are keen on reading their own situation. The Palestinians don't have a situation in their own state as the Syrians do. Let's not forget that (President Hafez) Assad is from a minority (group) that he rules single-handedly.

There may be some changes in Syria. By having tension with Israel, he justifies his own rule. I think he realizes the time has come for peace. He wants an impossible negotiation. Namely, Israel first of all, hand over everything he requests and then (he) will negotiate about what Israel gets in return. That is realistic.

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Iraq displays military wares to mark Saddam's birthday

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — The Iraqi armed forces staged their first military parade since the Gulf war Monday to mark the 56th birthday of President Saddam Hussein, who attended the display in Baghdad.

Iraqi television late Monday showed the ceremony, which was called the "Parade of the Mother of All Battles," after the Iraqi name given to the Gulf war of January-February 1991.

Surface-to-air missiles, Raad and Ababil missiles on mobile rocket launchers featured in the three-hour display designed to show Iraq's military recovery since then.

According to Iraqi sources, these missiles have a range of less than 150 kilometres and are not banned by the United Nations, which has demanded the elimination of all Iraq's non-conventional weapons.

Warplanes and helicopter gunships flew overhead during the demonstration, which included displays of surface-to-air missiles, anti-aircraft guns, tanks, mobile cannon and armoured cars.

Units of the elite Republican Guard marched to martial music before the official reviewing stand where President Saddam in beret and battle dress, a revolver at his belt, stood to take their salute.

Five warplanes flew in a low formation over the capital, and one plane was refuelled in flight.

It was the first Iraqi military parade since one held in 1989 after the end of the eight-year war with Iran.

The Iraqi army, whose numbers were reduced by 60 per cent after the Gulf war, currently has some 400,000 men, and can count on support from an air force estimated to have more than 300

warplanes at its disposal. Foreign journalists in Iraq were not informed in advance of the military display, which took place near Baghdad's commercial centre, at a large ceremonial stadium.

President Saddam celebrates his birthday on April 28 and large-scale preparations are underway in Baghdad and his birthplace, the province of Tikrit, 180 kilometres north of the capital.

Iraq last held a military parade in 1989, almost a year and a half before the start of the Gulf war.

Nuclear fuel

Iraq has agreed in principle to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to remove 35 kilograms of nuclear fuel from a site southeast of Baghdad, IAEA spokesman David Kyd said Monday.

The nuclear fuel, currently under seal at Al Tuwaitha, will "very likely" be sent to Russia, reliable sources said in Vienna. The operation will be by air, in two trips, and may begin in July and be completed towards the end of the year, the sources said.

The cost, estimated at \$20 million, is to be borne by Baghdad under the U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq in the wake of the Gulf war.

The agreement in principle between IAEA and Baghdad sets out the steps the Iraqis are to take before the dangerous materials are transported, and was signed last week by IAEA Deputy Director-General Maurizio Zaffirero during a visit to Iraq, Mr. Kyd said. Mr. Zaffirero returned to Vienna last weekend.

The IAEA must first sign a parallel agreement with Moscow, the sources said.

The "very complicated" operation involves "very delicate materials that must be carefully packaged," Mr. Kyd said, noting that the containers must be able to withstand the force of a possible plane crash to prevent contamination.

France and Britain had at first expressed interest in taking the nuclear fuel, which originated in Russia and France. Moscow later made a lower bid for carrying out the operation.

Iraqis walk over Bush

Iraqis finally got to walk all over George Bush Sunday. Interior Minister Wathban Ibrahim Al Hassan led the way as he and other senior officials trod on a marble mosaic of the former U.S. president in the lobby of Baghdad's Al Rasheed Hotel.

They were entering the hotel to reopen areas damaged by a U.S. cruise missile in the dying days of Mr. Bush's administration.

The rocket struck on Jan. 17, killing two women — a hotel employee and a guest — as U.S. missiles pounded a high-tech factory in the outskirts of Baghdad. Iraq spent about 42 million dinars (\$125 million at the official exchange rate but a fraction of that on the black market) to repair the hotel.

Iran starts exercise

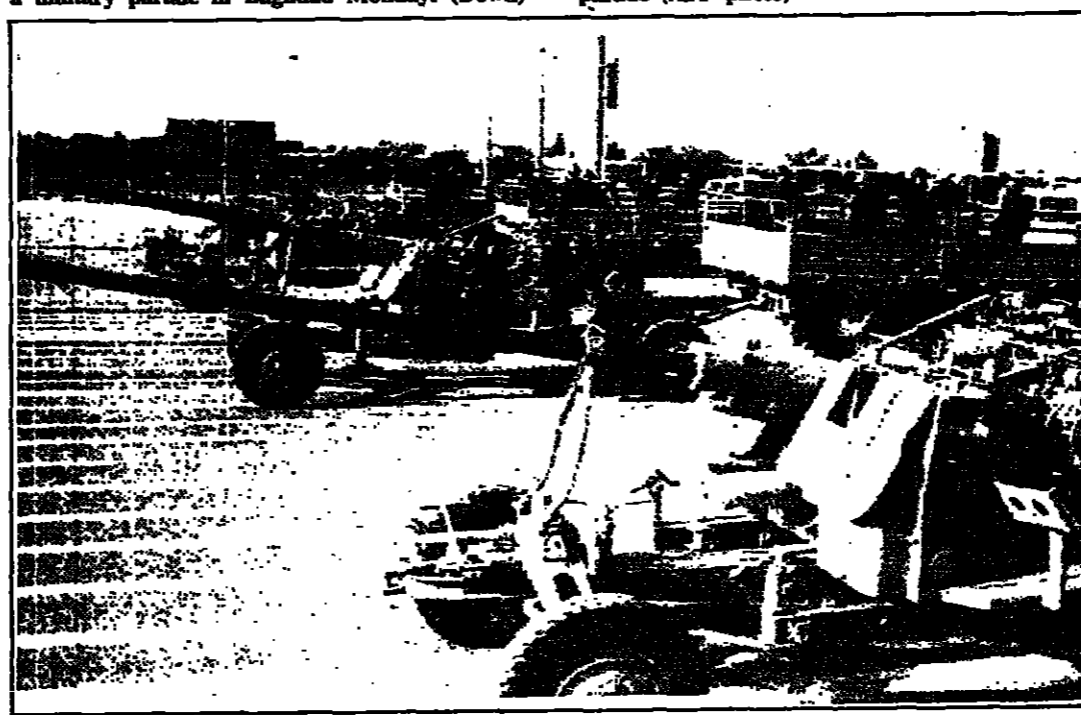
Iran started 10 days of military exercises in the northern Gulf Monday involving 36,000 sailors, soldiers and airmen, Iranian Television said.

The official news agency IRNA said Sunday ground, air and naval units, revolutionary guards and the country's "submarine unit" would take part in the six-stage Victory-4 exercise.



Iraqi President Saddam Hussein takes the salute at a military parade in Baghdad Monday. (Down)

Iraqi howitzers roll through Baghdad during the parade (AFP photo)



Rabbani defiant against Hekmatyar's blockade

KABUL (AFP) — Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani remained defiant Tuesday as a blockade imposed on Kabul by armed forces of his rival, Prime Minister-designate Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, began to bite.

"This blockade is not an Islamic action, moreover it is not humanitarian," presidential spokesman Abdul Aziz Morad said.

The blockade was put into effect Saturday by commanders of Mr. Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami faction, in protest at Mr. Rabbani's refusal to come to terms over the choice of a new government.

"Hezb is trying to pressure the people of Kabul but the spirit of the people is greater than the pressure of those Hezb commanders," Mr. Morad said.

Mr. Morad said he was confident the people would rise up and demonstrate against this injustice.

A popular uprising against Mr. Rabbani is also expected by the

Hezb commanders making the blockade.

However, even if the generally docile Kabul citizens did make any overt challenge to central authority they say they would expect swift reprisal.

"How could the people arise against the government. If they did they would get shot," shrugged a shopkeeper.

The simmering leadership feud between Mr. Rabbani and Mr. Hekmatyar, which was evident during the 14-year-old war against Soviet and Kabul government forces, erupted after the April 1992 victory of the Mujahedeen over the communist regime of President Najibullah.

Mr. Rabbani's Jamiat-e-Islami faction forces, led by Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Masoud, have fought Hezb in several battles for the uncontested control of the capital.

The last round of seven weeks of bloody clashes in January-February this year resulted in a stalemate which led to the March

signing of the Islamabad peace accords in which Mr. Hekmatyar was nominated prime minister-designate.

Mr. Rabbani has steadfastly refused to accept Mr. Hekmatyar's list of cabinet proposals, in which Mr. Masoud is neutered by demotion from the vital defence portfolio to the insecure role of deputy prime minister and chairman of a committee in charge of foreign affairs.

In order to resolve this political impasse peacefully a meeting of the majority of the Mujahedeen faction leaders has been scheduled for two days' time.

Meanwhile the prices of essential commodities in the bazaars continue to rise.

"This blockade is a kind of economic war against the people of Kabul," noted Mr. Morad.

Since the start of the blockade last Saturday petrol, diesel, flour, sugar, cooking oil, meat, and rice have all substantially gone up in price.

In the most dramatic price hike

the wholesale price of a 100 kilogram sack of wheat flour, necessary for baking the daily staple bread, jumped the equivalent of \$10 in just four days.

Many official workers earn around only \$30 a month in government ministries, while a family of eight consumes one sack of flour a month.

The airport, however, remains open and flights by the state airline Ariana are operating as normal.

Tuesday was the third day without electric power in Kabul, but it was not clear whether the breakdown was due to a deliberate cut in the line by dissidents or other causes.

"As far as I know, the problem is a technical one, and power should be restored tomorrow or the day after," Mr. Morad said.

He said that if necessary the coloured lights strung up around the city for Wednesday's anniversary celebration of the Islamic victory in Afghanistan would be lit by diesel generators.

King opens JTV satellite channel

(Continued from page 1)

communications among the various sectors and leadership and remain open and responsive to the needs of society reflecting its cultural, economic and social values on a backdrop of political parliamentary and democratic background.

The King said that "it is the right of every citizen to have access to information and this is the right participation of each citizen to serve his nation."

The media should uphold the nation's high values, must remain objective in criticism and should remain fair in judgement," he said.

The new satellite channel will operate through Channel 24 of ArabSat, the Arab satellite.

Tuesday's launching was part of the country's silver jubilee. It came nearly three months of trial telecasts, Jordan Radio and Television Corporation Director General Radi Alkhas said.

Mr. Alkhas said that following the start of the experimental transmission in the past months, Jordan Television received feedback from viewers around the Arab World, expressing satisfaction with the quality of programmes.

Viewer feedback from Saudi Arabia, the Gulf region and other Arab states has been excellent, he said.

The corporation has appointed correspondents for the channel in London, Brussels, Paris, Vienna, New York, Washington, Cairo,

Tunis and Rabat and more will be added shortly, he said.

At the end of Tuesday's celebration King Hussein decorated a number of staff members who have been working for 25 years in the Jordan Radio and Television Corporation with various medals.

The King also presented gifts to 30 employees who completed 30 years of service with Jordan Television.

King Hussein decorated Dr. Alkhas with Jordan's Independence Medal of the First Order, Jordan TV Director Ibrahim Shah Zada and Hani Farraj with Jordan's Al Kawkab medal of the Second Order.

Zahia Innab, Line Greiss and Rimon Iskandar were decorated with Jordan's Medal of the Third Order.

The King also decorated driver Farouq Jamil Ahmad with Jordan's Independence Medal of the Fifth Order.

The celebration was attended by Their Royal Highnesses Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein, Prince Faisal Ben Al Hussein, Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, the speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament, Royal Court Chief Khalid Al Karaki, Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Thougan Hindawi, Deputy Prime Minister and Transport Minister Ali Suheimat, the King's Private Chamberlain, Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Ibrahim Izzeddin and directors of information institutions.

Expellees prepare to return home

(Continued from page 1)

Hadi. Expelled in 1968 for organising women's demonstrations against the occupation authorities, she has lived in Jordan since then. She is a member of the PNC.

"I have been waiting for this moment for a very long time. I really am counting the hours now," she told the Jordan Times Tuesday.

Abdul Jawad Saleh, expelled mayor of Al Birah, has been ready for his return after 20 years in exile for weeks. "I will leave within hours" after the announcement is made, he told the Jordan Times.

Hanna Nasir, 54, president of Bir Zeit University who was expelled in 1974, was busy cleaning up his desk at the university's liaison office in Jabal Anman and was not available for comment. "He is very excited. We are all very excited," his wife Tania told the Jordan Times.

Along with the symbolic return of expellees Israel is expected to execute widening measures designed to convince Palestinians of its serious intentions towards peaceful co-existence with the Palestinians.

Large numbers of the 26,000 Palestinian political prisoners held in Israeli detention camps are expected to be released within the coming weeks, PLO officials said.

"Improved human rights conditions which will put an end to Israeli practices of bulldozing Palestinian homes, sealing off the occupied territories, and separating Palestinians living in Jerusalem from the West Bank and Gaza are expected to be introduced shortly," said a PLO official on condition of anonymity Tuesday.

The establishment of a human rights working group, in which

Pentagon seeks \$750m to finance Somali action

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — The Pentagon asked the Congress Monday to take \$750 million from "Star Wars" research and other areas of current defence spending to pay for the U.S. military's operations in Somalia.

"There are no more painless pockets to tap," Defence Secretary Les Aspin told reporters, noting that the American humanitarian effort will officially end in early May although a few thousand U.S. troops will remain in the area for emergencies.

Mr. Aspin said at a news conference that his request to "re-programme" fiscal 1993 Pentagon funds from such areas as the anti-missile Strategic Defence Initiative, commonly called "Star Wars", to pay the Somalia bill was to make sure that the money does not come from daily military operations costs.

"Reduced defence budgets severely limit the flexibility we have to do things like the Somalia reprogramming," he said. "The problem is we're talking about a fiscal year 1993 budget which is already tight when it comes to finding sources."

Mr. Aspin's statement came as U.S. marines in the capital of Mogadishu Monday ended a five-month humanitarian mission to Somalia when they handed over control of the city to a United Nations military force.

The Pentagon request, which requires approval by the Senate and House of Representatives, includes reprogramming of \$80 million in Star Wars funds, \$274 million from immediate spending on new executive and cargo jet aircraft, \$136 million for lower-priority military equipment and other areas.

Mr. Aspin noted that some lawmakers might object to some of the shifts in funds.

"You can make a case for some of those things on that list, but it's going to be harder and harder," he said. "There are no more free goodies out there."

In Mogadishu Monday, a Pakistani regiment, part of a new 30,800-strong U.N. force to be deployed in Somalia by May, took over the policing of the city from the 2,500 U.S. marines scheduled to fly home Wednesday.

The U.S.-led coalition came ashore Dec. 9 to help in the distribution of aid to the country's starving and sick. Some 350,000 people died last year in Somalia from famine and disease.

Next week — possibly Tuesday — the United Nations is expected to assume overall operational control, and start the mammoth task of rebuilding war-torn Somalia. Among the U.N. troops are 500 Pakistanis.

Monday's ceremony had a bit of an impromptu flavour, however, after it was discovered that last known tape of the American anthem in Somalia had apparently been packed in a hurry by other Marines who had already flown home.

So a 22-year-old Marine, who had sung the anthem at a couple

of basketball games back home, agreed to perform.

Marine Colonel Buck Bedardhan who has been commanding U.S. forces in the capital, also spoke to the soldiers. Somali police officers and civilians gathered at the ceremony.

He said he took a final drive around the city to compare conditions with when he arrived.

"It was a city where the guns ruled. No one went out at night. Col. Bedardhan recalled. "Today, schools are open. The Somali police force is back in their barracks. Shops are open. Markets are thriving. We have freedom of movement, day or night. I feel very good about what we have done."

Also Monday, a U.S. amphibious unit containing 3,500 Marines and sailors pulled out from the southern port city of Kismayu, where it has been bolstering Belgian forces. Their departure reduces the American contingent in Somalia to 7,000.

U.S. army soldiers hand over Merca, the last sector in their American control, to the troops from Pakistan Wednesday. The U.N. begins shouldering most of the operation's costs Saturday.

Marines and soldiers have been leaving in groups of 350 or more nearly every other day for the last week. The total American forces will dwindle to about 4,000 over the next year as part of the U.N. force.

The remaining U.S. troops' duties will vary widely. They will include a quick-reaction force that will respond to outbreaks of trouble in the country.

Although some American personnel will remain in Mogadishu — both on the streets and in command and support roles — they are largely being replaced by the Pakistanis.

Canada orders military probe

Canada has ordered a military board of inquiry into the deaths of three Somalis allegedly killed by Canadian soldiers and one who died of a beating while in their custody, Defence Minister Kim Campbell said Monday.

"It will inquire into whether any of the concerns arising from this Canadian forces operation are the result of systematic problems, particularly in the Canadian airborne regiment," Ms. Campbell said in a statement to reporters.

Canadian forces are part of the task force that is helping rebuild order in Somalia.

Ms. Campbell said she has been careful not to discuss details of the incidents, two of which are under investigation by military police.

But concerns over the secrecy surrounding the deaths and actions of Canadian forces had prompted her to take action, she said.

"There have been press comments about violence and racism exhibited by Canadian troops in Somalia," Ms. Campbell said.

Three Somalis have allegedly been shot by Canadian soldiers, and one has died in their custody in the last three months.

Little response to call for Eritrea aid

By David Ghazian
Agence France Presse

ASMARA — Relief officials are concerned that international neglect may lead to disaster in Eritrea, where most people depend on food aid after a 30-year war and repeated famines.

The World Food Programme (WFP) appealed for \$48 million to feed Eritreans in January. "To date the response has been almost nil," said Brenda Barton, a WFP information officer.

"This is alarming because food aid shipments take an average of six months to arrive," she said. "The food pipeline might dry up by August, when relief stocks will be consumed."

Good rains last year after three years of drought brought better harvests, but Ms. Barton said that "significant needs still remain."

Experts say it will take several years for Eritreans to achieve self-sufficiency in food.

"Our first priority is food security," said Haile Wolde-dense, economics secretary in the provisional government formed two years ago after separatist rebels seized power.

Mr. Haile said up to 80 per cent of Eritrea's estimated 3.5 million people, including 750,000 exiles, still survived on food aid.

And Eritrea's meagre resources will be further strained by the planned return of refugees abroad, about 500,000 of whom still

languish in Sudanese refugee camps.

The WFP says 1.5 million war and drought victims, including refugees who have recently returned, are most in need.

The government is hoping for an influx of development aid after a referendum on independence from Ethiopia, that ended Sunday.

The referendum is widely expected to ratify the de facto independence Eritreans have enjoyed for two years.

But agriculture has been completely disrupted by the secessionist war.

The regime of ousted Ethiopian dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam banned peasants from owning land, but his policies of collectivisation resulted in disaster.

The Eritrean government is still considering how to distribute land and establish the agricultural infrastructure that will allow it to resettle people made homeless by the vicious war that killed an estimated 80,000 people.

From 1990 to 1992, Eritreans received 750,000 tonnes of food aid, 300,000 tonnes of which were delivered in 1992 alone, Ms. Barton said.

The WFP has also spent more than \$8 million on rehabilitation of the war-scarred Red Sea ports of Massawa and Assab, essential to speed the flow of food aid.

Massawa, captured by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front in 1990, was liberated from shelling and bombing, and Assab was also badly damaged.

Peace talks resume in Washington

(Continued from page 1)

tees to deal with Palestinian complaints, officials said.

"There is nothing important to report today," Mr. Arafat said after a two-hour meeting with the Israelis. Agreeing, Itamar Rabinovich, who doubles as Israel's ambassador here and as a negotiator, told reporters: "Much was not accomplished today."

He said Syria had been "rather vague about its peace offer. But, Mr. Rabinovich said, there is a mutual agreement to move forward."

Earlier, Mr. Rabinovich had cautioned: "We will not be able to move forward without getting that very specific, explicit and precise definition of peace."

But Mr. Arafat said the details should be worked out by the two sides only after Arafat agrees to give up all

of the Golan Heights.

"The only way to achieve comprehensive peace is with complete withdrawal," Mr. Arafat said.

He said Syria was offering "complete peace" and there was no better definition than that.

"We are entering this time a decisive phase in the peace process," he said. "What we hope is this ninth round does not end with the same fate as the previous rounds."

Israel had offered to relinquish territory before the talks ceased in mid-December. But Israel declined to say how much of the land it seized in the 1967 war it would give up until Syria spelled out its peace terms.

Entering the State Department on a chilly bright day, Mr. Rabinovich said: "We are quite curious to know if they came with specific and concrete responses to our questions."

Christopher meets peace delegates

(Continued from page 1)

the Arab side, Israeli supporters in the U.S. have taken a more apprehensive position. In fact several attempts have been made to clarify the "full partner" concept as one that would preclude added U.S. pressures on the Israelis to be forthcoming in negotiations.

The American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the principal pro-Israel lobby in the U.S., has circulated an Israeli-sited "clarification" on what U.S. officials intended the term to mean. That circular, published in their bi-weekly newsletter, extrapolates that full partner does not mean an arbiter (a third party making a decision) nor a mediator (a third party making a public recommendation) nor a judge ("commonly defined" as someone vested with the authority to settle a dispute).

Rather, the circular says, full partner means an intermediary (a third party, testing ideas, helping define the link between the parties), facilitator ("commonly defined" as someone who helps make things easier) and as an honest broker ("commonly defined" as a neutral agent).

Arab negotiators who want of such attempts at defining the issues and setting the agenda — obviously attempted by the AIPAC definition — believe it is a dangerous spina. They hoped it could be rectified in Tuesday's meeting with Mr. Christopher.

Arab negotiators have viewed the U.S. intention in a more positive light — although the exact definition may be only better understood at the end of this round — which they say is being further consolidated by the sense of "comprehensiveness" that such a meeting confirms.

"The fact that this administration is initiating this round's talks by calling a joint meeting of all parties affirms their commitment to the comprehensiveness of a settlement (to the Arab-Israeli conflict)," a senior Arab delegate told the Jordan Times.

"We are encouraged by the fact that the Arab parties are meeting as one team which obviously adds to the sense of comprehensiveness," Dr. Muasher said.

To the Arab side, the translation of the Christopher meeting as an indication of a commitment to comprehensiveness goes a long way in alleviating the fear of any possibility of having individual Arab countries sign Camp David-style separate peace treaties with Israel.

The Tuesday afternoon meeting was including heads of all Arab delegations with one extra negotiator from those teams adding up to eight negotiators. The Israelis will be represented by two members from each of their negotiating teams totalling six Israeli negotiators. Jordan will be represented by chief delegate Abdul Salam Majali and Ambassador Fayez Tarawneh.

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They stomped on and tore a Palestinian flag and denounced Mr. Rabin, who authorised the negotiators to offer "territorial compromise," as "a traitor."

In wooing the Palestinians back to the table, Mr. Christopher had offered a number of assurances, and he said the talks might lead to self-government.

Mr. Christopher also told an Arab-American group last Friday night: "I am determined that we not only seem enhanced but that we actually are enhanced."

In Amman, the Muslim Brotherhood bloc in the Lower House of Parliament issued a statement demanding

Palestinians seek neutral panel

(Continued from page 1)

also cover the issue of water-sharing.

The Geneva talks opened a few hours before the key bilateral negotiations were set to restart.

A total of 40 countries, including Israel and 13 Arab states, were taking part in the meeting where which is co-chaired by the United States, Russia, the European Community (EC), Japan, the World Bank and host nation Switzerland.

Syria and Lebanon boycotted the meeting, as they did earlier rounds in Vienna and Washington.

about regional cooperation, about this and that. So long as we are not treated as a party with full rights like other parties of the area no advances can be made," he warned.

Mr. Khoudary noted that unlike Israeli settlers in the occupied territories, the Palestinians are prohibited by Israel from digging new wells or enlarging existing ones.

But he said, citing the Israeli delegation, that Israel had accepted that Arab-Israeli talks opening Tuesday in Washington

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Lebanese teachers start indefinite strike
BEIRUT (R) — Most of Lebanon's 70,000 teachers began an indefinite strike Tuesday, presenting the six-month-old government of Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri with its first major labour dispute. Most private and public schools failed to open, in response to orders by teachers' unions demanding pay raises and more benefits. Mr. Hariri, a banking and construction tycoon in his first political post, formed a government in October, pledging to revive the economy after 15 years of civil war. In another pay dispute, Lebanon's 375 judges are discussing whether to resign in protest at the government's refusal to increase their salaries.

Top PLO visitor at French foreign ministry
PARIS (R) — Top Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) official Ahmad Koreih called at the French foreign ministry Monday in the first contact between the PLO and France's new centre-right government. A ministry spokesman said Mr. Koreih, head of the PLO's economic affairs and planning department, met Secretary-General Serge Boidevaix. No details were immediately available on their talks.

UAE cracks down on dirty taxi drivers
ABU DHABI (AFP) — Authorities in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are cracking down on dirty taxi drivers, impounding their cars and taking away their licences until they clean up their act. "They gave the car back to me today but not the licence," said one driver whose taxi was among 53 that police seized here Saturday. "They told me I can get the licence if I clean my car and put on proper clothes." A police official said there would be more raids to ensure the UAE's 5,000 taxi drivers comply with health and safety rules. "Some of them had the same clothes on for two weeks," the official said. Fadi Khan of Pakistan said he passed the test. "The policeman looked into my car and started smelling," he recalled. "He then stared at me and asked: How many days have you been wearing these clothes? I said three days, he then told me it is better to change them the next day." Iqbal Khan, another Pakistani, said police complimented him. "They said nice words to me when they saw my car was very clean as I have just cleaned it," he said. "I think they are right because how can you take a taxi full of sand and dirt and its driver has the same clothes on for 20 days." The crackdown is part of a long-term health campaign that was shut many restaurants and banned spitting in public.

U.N. sends medical aid to Najibullah
ISLAMABAD (AP) — The United Nations sent medical supplies to Afghanistan's war-shattered capital Monday as well as a doctor for ex-ruler Najibullah, who is suffering from kidney stones. Mr. Najibullah has been confined to a sprawling U.N. compound since the Afghan resistance, which he battled for 14 years, overran Kabul last year. He has been suffering from kidney stones for nearly three months, and medical workers who have examined him say he has lost nine kilograms, said Sotirios Mousouris, the U.N. special envoy to Afghanistan. Mr. Mousouris has appealed to Afghanistan's fragmented government to let Mr. Najibullah leave the country for medical treatment, but so far they have refused. Mr. Mousouris said the United Nations sent a doctor to examine Mr. Najibullah, although his condition is not believed to be serious. The two U.N. aircraft that left Islamabad for Kabul also carried tonnes of medical supplies and equipment for hospitals in the devastated capital. Mr. Mousouris said the United Nations is particularly worried about an estimated 200,000 people displaced by the bloody fighting between rival rebel groups in the past year.

Indonesia begins transporting pilgrims
JAKARTA (AP) — Indonesia Monday began transporting nearly 175,000 Muslims to Saudi Arabia for the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. This year's Mecca pilgrimage is the biggest ever arranged by the government. The minister of transportation, Haryanto Diantoro, who made a last-minute inspection at Jakarta's Halim Perdanakusuma airport, said he wanted to prevent a repeat of the chaos that marred last year's return arrangement, which delayed thousands of pilgrims. About 104,860 pilgrims joined the government-arranged trip last year and were delayed because chartered planes were not ready. A total of 175 flights will leave from four main airports in Jakarta, the North Sumatra capital of Medan, Surabaya in East Java and Ojung Pandano in south Sulawesi. About 80 per cent of Indonesia's 180 million people are Muslim.

UAE, Omani leaders discuss Gulf security
ABU DHABI (AFP) — The leaders of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and neighbouring Oman discussed Gulf security during talks in a border city Monday, the official UAE news agency (WAM) reported. It said UAE President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan met with Sultan Qaboos Ben Said in the UAE oasis city of Al Ain, where the Omani leader arrived Monday by land for a visit of a few hours. The talks covered the Gulf situation and ways to bolster security and stability in the region in addition to Arab and international issues and bilateral relations, the agency said. "The meeting was characterised by a spirit of full understanding and similarity of views," it said without elaborating. Sultan Qaboos, who later left the UAE, has proposed a 100,000-strong joint Gulf army to maintain security in the oil-rich region after the Gulf war. But the idea was apparently bogged down due to differences on details of the force.

Hong Kong team to make study in Israel
HONG KONG (AFP) — A 30-member delegation from Hong Kong's farming industry will leave Friday for Israel to study new agriculture technology there, a government spokesman said. The study tour, organised by the Agriculture and Fisheries Department, will participate in an international agricultural exhibition in Tel Aviv to learn new technology to promote Hong Kong's agricultural products. Thousands of agricultural experts from 115 countries are expected to take part in the triennial expo believed to have the most variety of exhibits. The group will also visit the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation headquarters in Rome. The delegation includes six marketing advisory board members.

Cyprus freezes Serbian assets
NICOSIA (AFP) — The Central Bank Tuesday ordered the freezing of an estimated several hundred million dollars in Serbian assets held in Cyprus, in line with U.N. sanctions. It sent letters to 20 offshore banks, including three Yugoslav banks, and six Cypriot ones, asking them to freeze accounts belonging to "Serbian-controlled entities." Andreas Philippou, a senior Central Bank official, said Serbian individuals are exempted. Mr. Philippou said there was "not more than a few hundred million dollars of there was Serbian-connected money in Cyprus." But he added a precise figure would not be known until the banks reported back to his office. Nor is it known how many of the some 500 Serbian offshore office. Nor is it known how many of the some 500 Serbian offshore office. Nor is it known how many of the some 500 Serbian offshore office.

Somali gets 20 years for banditry
MOGADISHU (R) — A "notorious bandit" has been jailed for 20 years by a court in the central town of Baidoa, in Somalia's first judicial trial in two years. No details were available. But a spokesman for the U.S.-led Unified Task Force (UNITAF) said the trial on Monday involved a notorious bandit. The case was a test for newly set up regional judicial administrations, the spokesman said. The court's judgment was based on Somalia's former constitution and strict Islamic laws. Somalia has been in a state of anarchy, without a government or any form of authority or administration, since the overthrow of dictator Mohammad Siad Barre in 1991.

PLO takes 'last gamble' on peace talks as influence wanes

By Ed Blanche
 The Associated Press

AMMAN — Yasser Arafat has staked everything on a gamble that he can win enough Israeli concessions to stifle his own people's swelling opposition to the Mideast peace talks. He could well pull something out of the hat, as he has repeatedly done when the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) was on the ropes. But it may not be enough to halt the shift in the Palestinian centre of gravity from a movement that has championed the Palestinian cause for three decades to the new grassroots leadership in the occupied territories. There are deep anxieties in the PLO leadership in exile that their authority is being usurped by figures inside the occupied territories, who over the last five years have increasingly been directing the uprising against Israeli rule. The PLO leadership is sharply divided over Mr. Arafat's insistence on continued participation in the peace process. His opponents in the hierarchy argue that the potential gains are now being outweighed by the catastrophic cost if they fail. Support for Mr. Arafat in

the West Bank and Gaza has dwindled sharply in recent months as disillusioned and frustrated Palestinians swung behind the fundamentalist Hamas and other radical factions opposed to the talks. "The violence in the territories will not stop until the Palestinians obtain their rights to independence," said Mustafa Hamameh, director of Amman's Centre for Strategic Studies. "If the uprising has shown anything, it's that anti-occupation violence works." The negotiators themselves, all "insiders," strenuously objected to resuming the talks without guaranteed Israeli concessions. Mr. Arafat had to order them back. The delegates now need bodyguards in the occupied territories to protect them from their own people. A Hamas leader, Ibrahim Ghoshieh, said Saturday his faction will intensify attacks on the Israelis to thwart the peace talks. He said that did not mean killing Palestinian negotiators. But in the powderkeg territories, that may not count for very much. In Lebanon, Mr. Arafat is already locked in a vicious blood feud with Abu Nidal's renegade Palestinian faction, the Fateh-Revolutionary Council. It opposes any dealings with Israel and has killed many of Mr. Arafat's moderate lieutenants. occupied territories triggers harsh Israeli reprisals that only fuel the bloodletting and opposition to the peace process. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is also under intensified pressure from his hardliners, limiting his room for manoeuvre. Even among the four million Palestinians in the diaspora, support for the PLO is shrinking, particularly since Mr. Arafat shot himself in the foot by publicly supporting Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Saudi Arabia and the oil-rich Gulf states, long the PLO's bankrollers, cut off financial aid. Some 400,000 Palestinians were booted out by the Gulf states, particularly Kuwait. Losing the Gulf money forced Mr. Arafat to introduce sharp austerity measures, including hefty cuts in support for Palestinian refugees and the occupied territories. This has alienated the long-suffering "insiders" even more

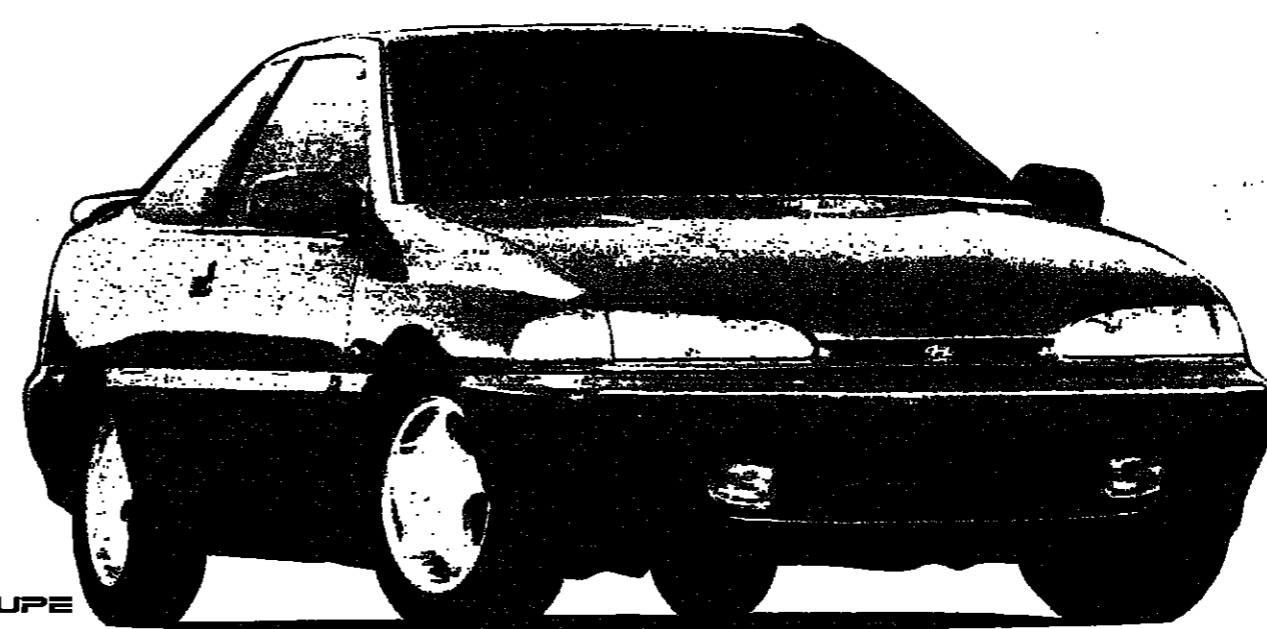
as their disdain for PLO leaders comfortably in exile increased. Militarily, the PLO is a spent force. Its guerrilla army was driven out of Lebanon by Israel's 1982 invasion and scattered around a half-dozen Arab countries. Palestinian sources said the fighters are leaving in droves these days. The PLO's standing as a potent political force was waning even before Mr. Arafat's Gulf crisis debacle. Now Mr. Arafat's only hope of reversing this is that the Israelis will realise it is in their interest to make concessions which will help him regain his once-unshakeable control of the Palestinian cause. Unless they produce some substantial compromise soon, it may be too late. There are signs that the Israelis are softening. Ed Blanche, the AP's Middle East news editor, has covered the region since 1985.

NEWS ANALYSIS

More than 20 people on both sides have been slain since last June in the resurgent eye-for-an-eye vendetta. Munir Makdah, a militia commander with Mr. Arafat's mainstream Fateh faction in South Lebanon, said Abu Nidal's gunmen "began their killings... just before each round of Middle East talks." Increased violence in the

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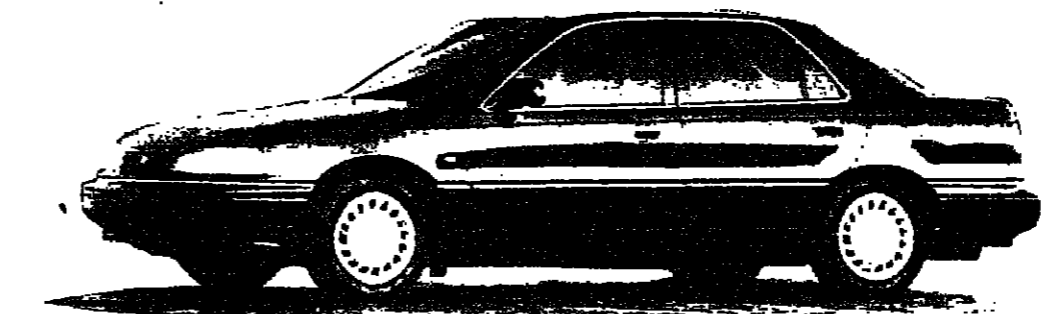
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JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET			
HOUSING BANK CHIEF AMMAN - CHIEF INVESTMENT			
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 27/04/1993			
HOUSING SESSION			
COUNTRY'S NAME	TRADE VOLUME	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	OPENING CLOSING PRICE
AMMAN NATIONAL BANK	21,740	138.000	138.000
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	398,390	4.990	5.000
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	91,800	2.710	1.800
THE HOUSING BANK	10,174	2.150	4.130
JORDAN KOWAT BANK	764	3.830	3.820
AMMAN INVESTMENT BANK	2,420	2.430	2.420
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	2,850	2.840	2.820
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	2,738	2.840	2.820
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	1,640	1.670	1.680
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	3,970	1.950	1.950
AMMAN BANKING CORPORATION/JORDAN	877	1.670	1.670
AMMAN BANKING CORPORATION/JORDAN	3,400	3.400	3.400
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	748,742	1.800	1.890
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	98,970	9.900	9.900
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	1,744	2.910	2.910
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	840	3.200	3.250
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	8,023	3.250	3.250
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	7,300	8.990	7.300
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	7,943	1.340	1.320
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	2,250	2.250	2.250
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	113	0.430	0.450
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	33,153	4.100	4.050
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	122,072	1.750	1.770
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	7,046	1.220	1.160
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	5,540	1.860	1.890
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	10,174	2.150	4.130
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	4,360	10.500	10.600
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	69,150	4.100	4.050
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	113,082	1.970	1.970
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	24,570	10.500	10.500
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	877	1.670	1.670
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	48,154	6.970	6.950
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	60,323	7.100	7.230
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	338,885	7.040	7.200
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	7,700	32.300	32.000
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	14,028	1.710	1.710
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	1,598	0.710	0.710
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	355,095	14.000	14.000
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	69,150	4.100	4.050
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	6,333	13.200	13.200
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	14,028	1.710	1.710
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	12,198	3.230	3.230
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	1,098	0.600	0.600
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	64,515	6.100	6.100
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	14,028	1.710	1.710
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	44,824	4.320	4.200
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	10,350	0.600	1.250
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	384,106	12.100	12.020
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	16,524	6.820	6.990
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	2,747	40.200	40.180
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	1,019	0.990	0.920
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	53,035	5.330	5.330
GRAND TOTAL	3,707,162		

Financial Markets

In co-operation with
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U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close Date 26/4/93	Tokyo Close Date 27/4/93
Sterling Pound	1.5834	1.5833
Deutsche Mark	1.5705	1.5746
Swiss Franc	1.4195	1.4240
French Franc	5.3090	5.3195 **
Japanese Yen	110.58	110.48
European Currency Unit	1.2417	1.2405 **

** USD Per ECU

*** European Opening @ 8:00 a.m. GMT

**** European Closing @ 5:00 a.m. GMT

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Studies point to OPEC bid for higher oil price

LONDON (R) — Logic seems to be telling Saudi Arabia and the rest of OPEC that the time has come to opt for a strategy of higher world oil prices.

That logic may look inescapable, say some top Western analysts, if the United States and other consumer governments go ahead and levy proposed new "carbon taxes" on oil.

But, adds Mehdi Varzi at Kleinwort Benson Securities in London "OPEC has little time left to re-think its fundamental strategy."

Mr. Varzi's team has just produced a 42-page study on the outlook for oil which concludes that the Saudis were probably right in the mid-1980s to adopt a policy of low prices.

Oil demand rebounded and Saudi revenue needs were met from higher volume. But Mr. Varzi thinks that times may have changed.

He shares a view which is widely held within OPEC (Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) that cheap oil in the 1990s will simply invite escalating Western taxes.

The West's finance ministers, not OPEC, will enjoy the pro-

ceeds from future rises in OPEC production but, ironically, OPEC will still have to find the money to install new output capacity to meet the higher demand.

The London-based Centre for Global Energy Studies is a "think tank" founded by the former Saudi oil minister, Sheikh Ahmad Zaki Yamani.

Even with extra taxes adding up to \$10 per barrel, it finds that the world will still need OPEC output capacity of 34 million barrels per day by the year 2000 — from 26 million now.

But it believes that, at constant nominal export prices, additional OPEC earnings would only just cover the cost of some \$40 billion needed to build the extra capacity.

"It's crazy," said an OPEC industry official. "We invest our money in providing them with more oil just so they can tax it."

Yet another new study, from analysts led by Fergus MacLeod at NatWest Securities in London, looks at Saudi Arabian finances.

It finds that Saudi foreign assets may by now have fallen below \$20 billion from \$120 billion in 1986 thereby "severely

reducing the scope for future budget deficits."

The Saudis would prefer to get their revenue by continuing to push high volumes of cheap oil, the NatWest analysts add.

"But they may feel they are left with no choice if the stimulus to demand from low prices is blunted by higher taxes."

None of this, however, explains how a fractious OPEC might discover the discipline on honouring its output quotas which would be needed to ratchet prices up.

Last week's talks in Oman, for instance, between OPEC and other producers resulted in no specific steps on pricing.

Kleinwort's Varzi thinks OPEC must act decisively within the next few months to reaffirm its official goal of an average price of \$21 per barrel.

Current prices are below \$19. Mr. Varzi also feels that OPEC must reallocate quotas to favour the poorer members like Nigeria, who will otherwise cheat.

Saudi Arabia, if serious about higher prices, would have to be ready to concede some of its jealously guarded market share.

Gold prices moving up

LONDON (R) — Gold prices hit an eight-month high Tuesday and the dollar strengthened against the mark as currency traders began anticipating a further easing of German monetary policy.

At Europe's midsession, gold traded at \$352.25 an ounce, after a morning fixing in London of \$352.80, its highest setting since last August. It had closed in London Monday at \$350.20.

Traders said a deal Monday between international financiers George Soros and Sir James Goldsmith sparked the rally, which was fuelled by heavy Far East business and a strong close in United States.

Media reports said Mr. Soros had paid \$400 million to Mr. Goldsmith for 10 million shares in U.S. gold producer Newmont Mining Corp. and that Mr. Goldsmith had invested the money in gold bullion.

"It's changed the way we see the market," one dealer said.

Skal Club Amman elects new board

AMMAN — Skal Club Amman, which is part of an international movement "to develop true friendship and common purpose among members of the tourist industry," has elected a new board Monday.

The new board members are Messrs. Samir Sawalha (President), Samir Ikkawi (vice-president), Khalil Ibrahim (Secretary), Faqeh Bisharat (treasurer), Ghaleb Sawalha, Qumari Tawal and Zaki Ayyoubi (members).

Skal Club Amman was established in 1966 and endeavours through tourism, to promote mutual understanding and poster goodwill between the peoples of the world.

Britain says longest recession since '30s is over

LONDON (Agencies) — Britain says its longest recession since the 1930s is over, bringing new hope to depressed businesses and the unemployed, but reservations about recovery linger.

The 2-1/2-year recession, which has undermined the conservative government of Prime Minister John Major, was declared over after the release of economic figures Monday.

Central Statistical Office figures showed the gross domestic product grew by 0.2 per cent in the first quarter of 1993. Minus oil and gas production, widely regarded as a more accurate measure, output rose by 0.6 per cent.

"Today's figures are the best evidence so far that the economy is recovering across a broad front," Chancellor of the Exchequer (Finance Minister) Norman Lamont said in a statement issued by the treasury.

Recovery has taken a long time and the wounds of the longest downturn since the depression of the 1930s will take years to heal. The news followed a series of encouraging figures.

One in 10 Britain's work force is out of the job, 60,000 businesses have failed and the economy will have to grow fast just to get back to where it was three years ago.

Many economists believe the economy has only recovered now because the government's old and much-cherished economic strategy — locking the pound in the European currency grid — collapsed last September.

Mr. Lamont remained cautious, after once wrongly announcing that "green shoots" of recovery and appeared, and warned of a further "tight round" of British public spending.

"The public sector borrowing requirement is a matter of concern to me," he said on Channel 4.

Iraq blames 'selfish' traders for price hikes

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq blamed greedy traders Tuesday for recent food price hikes and said it was delivering thousands of tonnes of rice and sugar to community shops for low-paid civil servants.

"The ministry of trade has decided to pump 300 tonnes of rice, 300 tonnes of sugar and 50 tonnes of cooking oil to each of the country's provinces," newspapers reported a ministry source as saying.

"The measure is to provide foodstuffs to all citizens to enable them face the increase in the prices of sugar, rice and cooking oil caused by certain selfish traders," the source said.

The ministry oversees a rationing system which provides families with between a third and half their basic food needs at giveaway prices.

It also supplies community shops with basic foods at prices lower than those on the open market.

Only low income civil servants are entitled to buy from these shops.

In addition to monthly government rations, each family receives three kilograms of rice, three of sugar, 1.5 kilograms of cooking oil and 250 grams of tea.

Last year the government executed 42 traders in a government crackdown on hoarding and profiteering.

Three hundred traders were arrested last month for overcharging.

On Monday, the Iraqi dinar took another record dive and

traders said the government was forced over the weekend to stop buying dollars for vital imports.

The dollar fetched about 70 dinars on the Baghdad black market Monday. At the weekend the rate reached 95.

"There was a crazy buying of the dollar," a trader said on Monday. "The black market had never seen anything like it."

Before Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, U.N. trade sanctions and the Gulf war, the dinar was worth \$3.10. That is still the official value, almost 300 times the unofficial weekend rate.

With lifeblood income from oil exports choked off for 2-1/2 years, importers — including the state, which purchases food abroad for its rationing system — must buy dollars at the market rates, either in or outside Iraq.

Traders said the currency rebounded Monday after the government took an unannounced decision to stop buying dollars.

They said further declines in the dinar will be difficult to prevent because the government cannot hold off buying dollars indefinitely. They believe government coffers are virtually empty of hard cash.

Trade ministry officials say they need about \$90 million a month to sustain a rationing system which gives Iraqi families between a third and half of their basic food needs at giveaway prices.

Although Iraqis must supplement their rations with purchases as ever-spilling prices from the free market, the rationing system

has been a major success in the government's struggle against the effects of U.N. trade sanctions.

A recent turning point for the dinar came in mid-February when the new U.S. administration convinced Middle East businessmen it would not relent on sanctions.

Milestone in the dinar's decline quoted by Baghdad traders include: Feb. 13 — 23 dinars to the dollar, Feb. 18 — 36 dinars, March 28 — 41 dinars, April 18 — 55 dinars, April 25 — 95 dinars.

Iraqi officials acknowledge that the government has put too much money in circulation, fuelling inflation and undermining the dinar.

But they say that without printing money Iraq would not have been able to repair Gulf war damage and launch big irrigation and building projects to absorb hundreds of thousands of young men released from the army.

"So far the government has been waiting for sanctions to be eased or lifted to save the sinking dinar," said one official Monday.

"Now it realises it cannot go on issuing more and more money for ever."

The United Nations has offered to let Iraq sell some oil abroad and use part of the income for purchases of food and medical supplies. Iraq has rejected the offer, saying the terms amount to a violation of its sovereignty.

Sanctions have also frozen billions of dollars of Iraqi assets in Western banks.

China foreign debt hits \$69.3b

BEIJING (Agencies) — China's accumulated foreign debt rose to \$69.3 billion at the end of 1992 and is likely to grow further as the country borrows more cash to fund development programmes, a senior finance official said.

Qu Youzhang, chief of the foreign investment administration at the State Planning Commission, told the official China Daily he saw China borrowing about \$50 billion between 1991-95.

"But even so, our debt service ratio will remain below 20 per cent of annual export earnings, the internationally-recognised safety level," Mr. Qu was quoted as saying in Sunday's edition.

Mr. Qu did not give a breakdown of China's borrowing or repayment plans between 1991-95, saying only that actual use of new foreign loans would be capped at about \$10 billion this year.

He said he expected China's long- and medium-term debt to level out at about \$70 billion by the end of 1995.

China's foreign debt in 1991 rose by 15.2 per cent to reach \$60.56 billion.

The 1992 figure of \$69.3 billion, a 14.4 per cent rise over the previous year, is made up of \$58.5 billion in long- and medium-term debt and \$10.8 billion in short-term debt, Mr. Qu was quoted as saying.

He said China could now afford to borrow more because of the high growth in its export income and rocketing overseas investment in the country.

Official planners now expect China to absorb \$35 billion in direct overseas investment be-

tween 1991-95, \$10 billion more than was originally forecast, the China Daily said.

China received \$11.6 billion in direct overseas investment in 1992, surpassing total overseas borrowing by about \$8.7 billion, the newspaper added.

"Moreover, China's ability to service its debt has been bolstered by speedy development of the country's foreign trade, which grew by 22.1 per cent in 1992 over the previous year," the China Daily said.

China's foreign exchange reserves now stand at about \$45 billion.

Seeking to boost its appeal to international lenders, China is now setting up a special emergency fund to guarantee on-time repayment of foreign loans, the China Daily said.

China is now in the middle of a peak repayment period.

The fund, to be drawn primarily from the export incomes of local enterprises, is now being run on a trial basis in several areas and is aimed at preventing a debt crisis "even if the burden of repayment piles up in the next

few years," it said.

"We believe China is in a good position to attract more foreign loans in the future," Mr. Qu was quoted as saying.

Chinese officials have recently announced sharply higher inflation figures but continued to paint a rosy picture of an economy that Western and even Chinese economists say privately may be spinning out of control.

Zhang Zhongji, spokesman for the State Statistical Bureau, released first-quarter figures that tell the story.

Inflation was the highest in five years. Retail prices in China's 35 biggest cities were up an average of 15.7 per cent from the first quarter of

Yeltsin tells Bosnian Serbs: No protection; Bihac under attack

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin warned Bosnian Serbs Tuesday they could expect no protection from Russia if they continued to defy an international peace plan for the former Yugoslav territory.

But a Foreign Ministry spokesman said the use of force by an international military contingent could deepen the conflict and spread it beyond the boundaries of former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Yeltsin described a plan drafted by mediators Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance and rejected Monday by Bosnian Serbs as the only prospect for peace in the region.

"The time has come for decisive measures to quell the conflict," he said in a statement.

Mr. Yeltsin's statement suggested a more confident Kremlin approach to Yugoslavia following the president's victory over hard-liners in Sunday's referendum.

Mr. Yeltsin won 58 per cent support in the plebiscite, which the president hopes will allow him to break the power of a parliament heavily coloured by nationalist thinking.

Nationalist opponents of the president regard his support of international sanctions against Serbia, including dispatch of troops under the U.N. flag, as a betrayal of cultural and ethnic links with Slav Serbs.

The United Nations stepped up the economic sanctions on rump Yugoslavia Tuesday over its failure to persuade Bosnian Serbs to accept the plan. The result, if the

sanctions are effectively applied, will be almost complete isolation.

Lord Owen warned of possible military consequences for Bosnian Serbs, who have forced Muslims from many of their territories in a campaign of what has become known as "ethnic cleansing."

The plan he co-authored with Mr. Vance proposed dividing Bosnia into 10 provinces on ethnic lines.

Mr. Yeltsin dispelled any possibility of Moscow breaking ranks with the West on Yugoslavia as long as he was president. The West had long feared the Kremlin could back down on a joint front that had been a litmus test of the post cold war order.

"The Russian Federation will not protect those who resist the will of the world community," Mr. Yeltsin said, withdrawing any remaining Serb hopes of help from Moscow.

The Russian president, despite his reference to "decisive measures," did not make it clear whether Russia would back the use of force against the Bosnian Serbs if economic sanctions failed to make them pull back.

But Foreign Ministry spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky said diplomacy must retain the upper hand.

"There has been enough war on the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina," he said.

The introduction of an international military component could further worsen the situation, creating conditions for the con-

flict to spread beyond its (present) boundaries ... with consequences that are hard to predict."

Meanwhile Serb forces defied the international community Tuesday by launching an offensive in Muslim-held northwestern Bosnia just as tightened United Nations sanctions went into force against Yugoslavia.

Heavy fighting also erupted in other parts of former Yugoslavia, one day after Bosnian Serbs refused to accept an international peace plan signed by rival Muslims and Croats.

About 1,000 Serb troops backed by eight tanks and artillery advanced several kilometres into the area around the town of Bihac at 4:00 a.m. (0200 GMT), the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) said in a statement.

It quoted U.N. military observers stationed in the Bihac region as reporting fighting in four locations. Some 300,000 people in the area are being supplied with aid by the U.N.

"The humanitarian consequences of sustained fighting in the area could be very serious," said the statement, which was issued in the Croatian capital Zagreb.

The new fighting was sure to anger the international community, which applied tough new sanctions against Serbian-led Yugoslavia Tuesday and is considering limited military intervention to halt the year-old civil war.

NATO military chiefs met in Brussels to discuss the possibility

of Western air strikes or other action, although it was not expected to produce any decisions.

U.S. President Bill Clinton said he hoped to announce steps against the Bosnian Serbs soon to force them to accept the plan.

"It is now, I think, clear that the United States and our allies need to move forward with a stronger policy in Bosnia," Mr. Clinton said in Washington Monday. He gave no details.

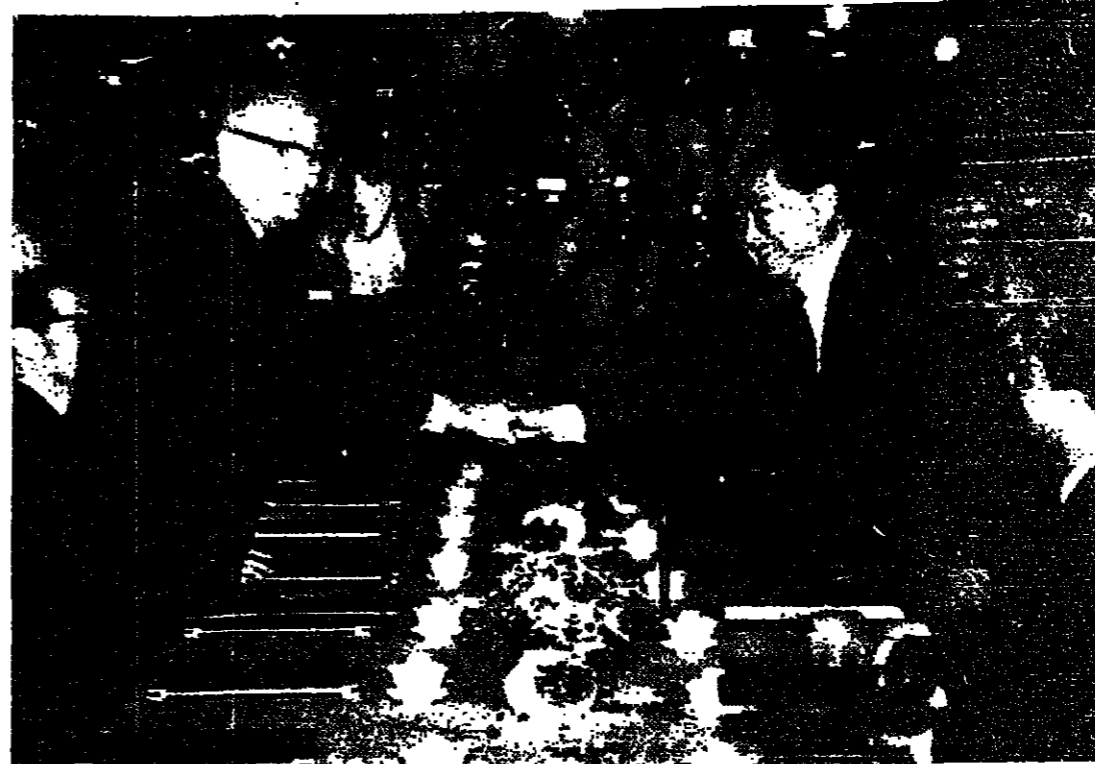
The sanctions stiffened a U.N. trade and oil embargo which was designed to force Yugoslavia to use its influence to end fighting in Bosnia that has killed thousands of people.

Fighting worsened in Bosnia Tuesday, with the Bihac attack the worst of a number of violations of a month-old ceasefire agreed by all three warring sides.

Muslim-controlled Sarajevo Radio did not immediately report the Bihac offensive, although it said two people had been killed in shelling of the area.

The radio reported fighting in the northern Bosnian towns of Brcko and Gradacac. It said 800 shells were fired at Muslim defence positions in Gradacac, a tank attack had begun and the town was rocked by blasts. It also said an unspecified number of civilians had been killed in the eastern town of Gorazde.

The Yugoslav News Agency, Tanjug, reported fighting between Serbs and Croats on nearly all fronts in the Serb-held Krajina region to the west and north of Bosnia.



Taiwan's chairman of the Strait Exchange Foundation (SEF), Koo Shen Fu (left) shakes hands with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Daohan chairman of the Association of Relations Across Taiwan Strait (ARATS) before their meeting Tuesday (AFP photo)

China, Taiwan open historic talks

SINGAPORE (R) — China and Taiwan opened two days of talks in Singapore Tuesday, their highest-level negotiations since the end of the Chinese civil war in 1949.

The heads of the two semi-official bodies handling ties discussed ways to expand trade and investment, cooperation to fight crime, and the creation of a regular, formal channel of communication between them.

The talks marked an easing of cold war tensions and rapid growth in economic links between China and Taiwan since the late 1980s. Taiwanese investment in China is estimated to total over \$7 billion.

"Establishing contact after a gap of 40 years, there are many problems that must be solved. If we sit down and talk, all issues can be worked out," said Wang Daohan, chairman of China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait.

His Taiwanese counterpart Koo Shen-Fu, chairman of the Straits Exchange Foundation, said Monday that people on both sides "desire the resolution of confrontation and progress towards reconciliation."

Both Peking and Taipei's nationalist government, which lost the civil war, claim to be the sole legitimate ruler of all China including Taiwan, and have vowed to reunify the island with the Chinese mainland one day.

Spokesmen for both delegations said the Singapore talks were "non-political" and did not deal with the issue of reunification.

But Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which wants the island to declare independence and abandon reunification, said it feared the Nationalists might be taking a first step towards a secret political deal with Peking.

"The Democratic Progressive

Party accuses the Nationalist regime of conspiring to betray the rights of the people of Taiwan by holding secret talks with representatives of China," the DPP said in a statement.

The DPP was barred from taking part in the talks but sent a dozen members of the parliament to Singapore to publicise its stand. Local police snatched a protest banner from DPP demonstrators outside the venue of the talks Tuesday.

Spokesmen for both delegations described the atmosphere of the talks as cordial, but said differences on economic policy had not been resolved.

China urged Taiwan to lift its ban on direct air and sea links with the mainland, and remove remaining restrictions on imports of Chinese goods and visits by Chinese businessmen. Taiwan has repeatedly said it will not permit direct transport links until political tensions ease further.

U.K., China still divided over Hong Kong

HONG KONG (AFP) — Britain and China are still divided over Hong Kong's democratic development, sources said Tuesday, as officials from the territory left here for further talks in Peking Wednesday.

Britain and China were still deadlocked on whether Governor Chris Patten's controversial proposals to broaden the electoral franchise in Hong Kong before 1997 that stirred up the six-month reform would be discussed, sources said.

In the absence of any progress made in the first round of talks in Peking ending Saturday, Michael Sze, constitutional affairs secretary, who is assisting British ambassador to China Robin McLaren in the negotiations, returned to Peking Tuesday, saying only "I'm always optimistic."

China, which takes over control of Hong Kong from Britain in 1997, remained firm on its stance that Mr. Patten's democratic reform package must be scrapped.

However, executive councillor

Baroness Lydia Dunn told reporters after emerging from a briefing with Mr. Sze that "the last round of talks were very business like."

"And we hope they will continue to be this way," he said.

"It is unlikely that progress can be made in the coming round of talks," one of the Chinese sources said, adding that Britain must adhere to earlier agreements on the transfer of Hong Kong and the post-1997 government of the territory.

U.S. arson expert says cult started fire that destroyed compound

WACO, Texas (R) — People inside the besieged Branch Davidians compound apparently set their own fate by setting the blaze that killed some 86 cult members, an arson investigator said.

The preliminary findings of the investigation, which showed the fire was started in two places inside the sprawling complex at about the same time, supported statements by federal authorities immediately after the 51-day siege ended on April 19.

Some of the nine surviving cult members said that federal agents ignited the flames when tanks, used to punch holes in the walls, knocked over kerosene lanterns.

Paul Gray, assistant chief investigator with the Houston Fire Department's Arson Bureau, ruled out that possibility, saying the fire would have started immediately after the last tank rammed the building.

Instead, photographic evidence

showed there was a lag of several minutes, he said.

Gray also said there was evidence that the blaze could not have resulted from a single blow to the structure.

"The two locations (where the fire started) were significantly distant from each other for us to conclude they could not have been caused by the same ignition source at the same time," Mr. Gray told a news conference.

S. African homeland refuses to give up independence

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Lucas Mangope, president of Bophuthatswana black homeland, warned Tuesday he would not allow the territory to be reincorporated into South Africa.

He called for a constitution for a new South Africa, to be drawn up by unelected "experts" to be put to a referendum before any elections took place.

"As things stand at the moment, there is no question whatsoever. I repeat no question whatsoever, of Bophuthatswana giving up her independence. We are surrendering nothing," Mr. Mangope told the territory's legislature.

"It is absolutely necessary to finalise all the principles of a new constitution at the multi-party negotiations (taking place currently in Johannesburg), have the constitution written by experts, and then have it approved in a referendum before holding elections for a new South Africa," he said.

Bophuthatswana, rich in minerals and the most economically viable of the four tribal homelands granted "independence" by Pretoria in concordance with the apartheid policy of racial segregation, has been slated by the African National Congress (ANC) for its repressive security forces and lack of political freedom.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

42 die, scores missing in Colombian flood

SANTAFE DE BOGOTA (AFP) — Rescue crews worked frantically into the night after flood waters tore through a rural area of northwestern Colombia, leaving 42 people dead, scores missing and hundreds more homeless, Medellin police said. The Taparto River in Antioquia Department burst its banks after heavy rains, destroying more than 50 houses and coffee, cane and banana crops, in rural areas around the town of Los Andes, 120 kilometres from Medellin. "It's impossible to know how many are dead and missing," said a police spokesman in Medellin. The storm brought down five bridges, cutting off road links to the Los Andes and its surrounding agricultural area, he said. Health authorities in Medellin have reported 73 people injured and rescue teams and emergency supplies were flown from Santafe de Bogota.

London police hunt 2 blast suspects

LONDON (AFP) — Scotland Yard's anti-terrorist squad Tuesday was questioning some 10 people arrested Monday and hunting two others seen fleeing from a builders truck shortly before it exploded, devastating London's financial district. The blast Saturday morning killed one, injured 45 and crippled business, leaving the area of London known as The City in shambles. Investigators were also analysing a videotape made by a surveillance camera in the region, but held out little hope the tape would produce identifiable images because of the angle and distance of the camera. The tape "doesn't help us at all as towards the identification of anyone," said David Tucker, head of the anti-terrorist branch. A witness who described the two fleeing suspects could say little more than that they wore hooded garments, said Tucker. He said the two walked away separately from Bishopsgate, site of the blast, and may have headed for Aldgate Underground station. Tucker said the truck had been stolen in northern England more than a month earlier, then repainted and fitted with false registration plates.

Georgia denies bombing Abkhazian town

MOSCOW (R) — The Georgian Armed Forces Tuesday denied Russian reports that one of their warplanes had bombed a town in the rebel western region of Abkhazia. Russian Television said Monday that a Georgian plane had bombed the separatist stronghold of Gudauta and a nearby Russian military base, killing a woman civilian and a Russian officer and wounding 25 people. "This is false information, we categorically deny it," a Georgian Defence Ministry spokesman said. Hundreds of people have been killed in Abkhazia since fighting broke out last August between Georgian government forces and Abkhazian separatists. Georgia accuses Russian forces of secretly arming and assisting the rebels from former Soviet bases in the Black Sea region. Russian denies the charges.

'Kim Il-Sung's health deteriorating'

SEOUL (AFP) — North Korean President Kim Il-Sung's health appears to have taken a turn for the worse recently, a Seoul press report said Tuesday, quoting unidentified South Korean officials. Yonhap News Agency quoted a Unification Board official as saying that a videotape of Mr. Kim's 81st birthday celebration on April 15 showed he appeared to have difficulty moving, especially when welcoming Cambodia's Prince Norodom Sihanouk. Another senior Seoul official was quoted as saying that, based on his television appearances and intelligence reports, the health of the world's longest reigning Communist dictator was "deteriorating considerably." Yonhap quoted the senior official as saying Mr. Kim was complaining from lack of sleep, hinting that he was suffering from insomnia.

Japan to join U.N. in Mozambique

TOKYO (R) — Japan, eager to play a larger role in U.N. operations, decided Tuesday to send 53 armed peacekeepers to Mozambique next month at the world body's request, government officials said. It is Tokyo's second post-World War II commitment to multilateral peacekeeping operations. Japan sent its first corps of peacekeepers — 600 engineering troops — to Cambodia in September. Since then, it has been under pressure from U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali to help elsewhere, particularly in Mozambique. A defence agency official said 48 of the peacekeepers would join transport units in the southern African country and the remaining five officers would be sent to the headquarters of U.N. Peacekeeping Forces (ONUMOZ) there.

Astronauts begin space science work

HOUSTON (R) — Astronauts aboard Columbia activated a cargo bay full of experiments as the joint German-U.S. space shuttle mission appeared to have left its troubles behind. The only apparent complication was a malfunctioning freezer for storing blood and urine specimens, but the use of a backup unit was expected to fix that problem. The 55th shuttle mission is strictly scientific, lacking any attention-getting activities such as space walks or satellite deployment. The German-U.S. effort includes studies in life and materials sciences, medicine, robotics, earth observation and astronomy. The seven-member crew is split into two shifts so the mission's 88 experiments can be staffed round-the-clock, with breaks for media interviews and scheduled amateur radio hookups with groups on Earth.

Senate panel recommends Andreotti trial

ROME (Agencies) — A Senate panel recommended Tuesday that former Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti should be stripped of his immunity from prosecution so that he can stand trial on charges of mafia conspiracy.

Panel member Antonio Franchi told reporters 11 of Mr. Andreotti's fellow-senators voted in favour, 11 abstained and one opposed the proposal. The issue is now due to be put to the vote of the full 326 members of the Senate next month.

Palermo magistrates on March 27 advised the seven-times Christian Democrat premier he was under inquiry, alleging on the basis of evidence from mafia turncoats that he had been "our" protector "from at least 1978 ... certainly to 1992."

Mr. Andreotti denied the allegations, accusing the Sicilian magistrates of political bias and saying he was the victim of a mafia vendetta because of his lifelong battle against organised crime.

"This is not a verdict of condemnation," said Sen. Franchi, a member of the ex-Communist opposition, after the panel vote.

"We recognise that Palermo magistrates did their work with a high sense of responsibility ... their attitude was not vindictive," he told reporters.

"I am not afraid of the truth and will tackle with firmness and decision all necessary moves to unmask this incredible machination," Mr. Andreotti said in a statement released after the panel vote Tuesday.

He said unspecified pressures had been put on the 23-member Senate panel "in order to create a climate of intimidation."

Mr. Andreotti said that when he full 326-member Senate would meet to debate the case, he would shed full light on what was happening "because it is not possible to trample on a whole life dedicated to the service of the state."

Meanwhile, the choice of Central Bank Governor Carlo Azeglio Ciampi as new prime minister was broadly welcomed in Italy Tuesday, especially in the economic sector where he has built up a large store of trust over the years.

He is the first person from outside parliament to hold the post in the history of the republic, choosing Mr. Ciampi Monday, resident Oscar Luigi Scalfaro took account of the strong desire, or change voiced by the electorate in last week's referendum.

"Governor of Italy," the press attired him, noting that the omission of the 73-year-old Ciampi had caught political parties on the wrong foot.

Mr. Ciampi immediately ruled out consultations with them on formation of a government, which is expected to contain a large number of technocrats to urge out the reforms the country allied for in the referendum.

Now having to play second violin, the outgoing centre-left ruling majority has nonetheless issued Mr. Ciampi of its support.

COLUMN

Blame God, not men, women told in Zimbabwe

HARARE (AFP) — Women should blame their problems on God, not men, Zimbabwe Vice-President Joshua Nkomo told 60 startled women at a development seminar, according to a report Tuesday. "The problem of women is not a problem brought about by men, it is a problem by the Creator himself," Mr. Nkomo was quoted as saying by the Herald newspaper. The 75-year-old Nkomo went on to say the Bible clearly showed that when Adam she "started problems" by letting Adam eat the forbidden fruit. "These problems are those that men and women face every day," Mr. Nkomo continued, to the amazement of the women meeting at the Zimbabwe Institute of Public Administration and Management outside Harare.

'Money launderer' quits after 31 years washing coins

SAN FRANCISCO (R) — San Francisco said good-bye to one of its most colourful characters Monday, when the world's only legal money-launderer retired after 31 years of washing dirty coins at a city hotel. Arnold Batliner began washing coins at the opulent St. Francis Hotel in downtown San Francisco in 1962 and has since cleaned an estimated 17 million in spare change. By washing all the coins used in the hotel, Mr. Batliner continued a tradition that began in 1938 when the hotel manager of the day, Dan London, ordered silver dollars to be cleaned to stop ladies' white gloves from getting dirty. Mr. Batliner, now 85, smiled proudly as hotel executives and other VIPs paid tribute to his long career at a champagne retirement party at the hotel and presented him with gifts and commemorative certificates. Jim Lazarus, chief of staff to San Francisco Mayor Frank Jordan, gave Mr. Batliner a proclamation declaring Monday Arnold Batliner Day in San Francisco. A plaque honouring Mr. Batliner will also be hung in the hotel lobby. The frail-looking white-haired Batliner, who was born three months after the St. Francis opened in 1904, said he had cleaned enough coins "to pay off the national debt."

81-year-old Madame Claude arrested for running brothel

MOULINS, France (AFP) — An 81-year-old widow has been jailed on charges of running a brothel at her home in this central French town, police said Monday. Renee Claude was suspected of engaging prostitutes aged 40 to 60 who used one of her bedrooms to entertain clients over the past 12 to 15 years. The investigators said she exploited the distress of the women who had financial problems.

Ivory coast cannibals jailed

ABIDJAN (R) — An Ivory Coast court has jailed three self-confessed cannibals and witches for five years, the evening newspaper Ivoir Soir reported. Quoting from the court transcript the paper said the women, Yvonne Deagbe Sake, Helene Toun Manou and Mose Kpea, ate four people, including Ms. Manou's son Oulai. The three witches from the remote village of Gaha, some 600 kilometres north of Abidjan, were arrested after the death by illness of a village youth. A woman who had been trying to cure the ailing boy accused Ms. Sake and Ms. Manou of killing him with magic and Ms. Manou went to the police to complain of slander. She denied killing the boy but admitted eating his corpse. Ivoir Soir said the women were sentenced to five years imprisonment and fines of about 5,500 each upon their release, a sum it would be impossible for them to raise. The paper did not say if they were convicted of murder, cannibalism or other offence.

Ex-PoW turned flat into cell

LONDON (R) — A Polish man haunted by his time as a prisoner during World War II turned his London flat into a cell with bars on the windows and slept in a cage every night, police told an inquest. Polish-born Kazimierz Symanski, 81, died of pneumonia after living for five years in his home-made cell. Neighbours said he was afraid of being gassed. Police said he had no electricity or water supply. "That flat was his world and had been removed, it would have been the death of him," policeman Nigel Newland said.

